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TITLE OF THESIS/TITRE DE LA THÈSE THE INFLUENCE OF VEDANTA AND BUDDHISM ON THE POETRY AND DRAMA OF T.S. ELIOT

UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITÉ UNIV. OF ALBERTA, EDMONTON.

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE PH. D.

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE GRADE 1979

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THE INFLUENCE OF VEDANTA AND BUDDHISM
ON
THE POETRY AND DRAMA OF T.S.ELIOT

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1979

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Influence of Vedanta and Buddhism on the Poetry and Drama of T.S.Eliot submitted by P.S.Padmanabhan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The Indian philosophical themes and symbols which are fused with the Christian doctrine in Eliot's poetry and drama have not been scrutinized and interpreted with the care and attention they deserve. This is surprising since Eliot's preoccupation with Indian philosophical thought dates back to his early youth and undergraduate days at Harvard.

It is not difficult to illustrate the _explicit_ use Eliot makes of Indian philosophy in his poetry; to cite but one example, he brings the Buddha and St.Augustine together at the very core of _The Waste Land_. But, in most instances, these allusions to Indian thought have not been related to his basic vision of the human condition.

Unless all direct references to Indian thought in Eliot's poetry and drama are regarded as mere window-dressing, they must be understood as indispensable parts of organic wholes, indicating a particularly valuable mode of penetration which might uncover the _implicit_ use Eliot makes of Indian philosophical thought.

Eliot's family background and upbringing contributed to the development of a ecumenical and tolerant spirit in him and encouraged him to explore and assimilate thoughts and perspectives beyond his own creed. Thus, when he went to Harvard, he studied Indian languages and philosophical and literary texts. Later, when he edited the _Criterion_, he published a considerable number of articles and book reviews pertaining to Indian philosophy; this indicated his continued interest in Indian philosophy and literature beyond his student days. Presumably, therefore, he assimilated a great deal of Indian philosophy and incor-

porated it in his poetry and drama.

Poetry, religion and philosophy are no doubt quite distinct from each other in the abstract, and may be regarded as having different functions. But, in the concrete, they overlap considerably, since all three of them, at their very highest and best, spring out of certain fundamental intuitions which are keenly experienced and felt to be of cosmic significance.

A comparison of the fundamental intuitions of Vedanta and Buddhism with those underlying Eliot's poetry and drama would enable one not only to gauge the deep influence of Vedanta and Buddhism on Eliot's *Weltanschauung*, but also to gain some insight into his basic vision of the human condition.

It is found that the philosophical and spiritual orientation of Eliot is essentially in accordance with the basic tenets of Vedanta and Buddhism and that these truths are fused with Christian doctrine in his poetry and drama. Consequently, there is, at first, the penetrating awareness of the pervasiveness of suffering and impermanence. Next, there is the recognition that the root-cause of all suffering is the craving that impels us to cling to transient material phenomena. Then, there is the realization that through the practice of detachment from craving and compassion towards those who suffer, the universal change and suffering can be transcended, though not negated, in the apprehension of the timeless in time. And above all, there is the deep feeling that permeates his works from beginning to end, the heart-felt yearning for a mystic union with the Ultimate Reality in one's own being, a yearning born out of the conviction that one must work out one's salvation with diligence, and expressing itself through passionate prayer which his poetry as a whole may be said to embody in the last analysis.

The basic concern that animates Eliot's poetic "raids on the inarticulate" - the awareness of man's intimate connection with both time and eternity, within the framework of the fact of human bondage and the possibility of human freedom - is absolutely universal and may well be called the 'philosophia perennis' that surfaces variously time and again in the religious and philosophical traditions of the East and the West.

It is clear, therefore, that Eliot not only had more than a nodding acquaintance with Indian philosophical thought but that he deliberately reached out beyond the confines of his Anglo-Catholicism and Occidental personality in a genuine attempt at East-West ideo-synthesis. And Eliot's vision of the human condition is one of the most reliable, if one is looking for a momentary stay against confusion in the contemporary chaos.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to express my gratitude to the University of Alberta for the fellowship which enabled me to prepare this thesis. I am also indebted to the staff of the University of Alberta Interlibrary Loan Service for assistance in obtaining the primary and secondary materials indispensable to this study. Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor A.H.Qureshi, for his help and encouragement during the most difficult stages of my work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following texts are frequently quoted in the thesis. Subsequent references to these texts are made in the abbreviated form shown on the left. The texts may all be found in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969).

LJ	"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
PL	"Portrait of a Lady"
P	"Preludes"
RWN	"Rhapsody on a Windy Night"
CN	"Cousin Nancy"
MA	"Mr.Apollinax"
G	"Gerontion"
SE	"Sweeney Erect"
DR	"Dans le Restaurant"
WI	"Whispers of Immortality"
SAN	"Sweeney Among the Nightingales"
WL	*The Waste Land*
HM	*The Hollow Men*
AW	*Ash-Wednesday*
JM	"Journey of the Magi"
SW	"Sweeney Agonistes"
CR	*Choruses from* The Rock
BN	"Burnt Norton"
EC	"East Coker"
DS	"The Dry Salvages"
LG	"Little Gidding"
MC	*Murder in the Cathedral*

FR	*The Family Reunion*
CP	*The Cocktail Party*
CC	*The Confidential Clerk*
ES	*The Elder Statesman*
AG	"At Graduation 1905"
CP	"Circe's Palace"

PART I

THE GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND

INTRODUCTION

> "The West is passing through a new Renaissance due to the sudden entry into its consciousness of a whole new world of ideas, shapes, and fancies. Even as its consciousness was enlarged in the period of the Renaissance by the revelation of the classical culture of Greece and Rome, there is a sudden growth of the spirit today effected by the new inheritance of Asia with which India is linked up. For the first time in the history of mankind, the consciousness of the unity of the world has dawned on us. Whether we like it or not, East and West have come together and can no more part."
>
> \- S.Radhakrishnan

The explication of the works of T.S.Eliot in recent years has become a minor industry. But the Indian philosophical themes which are fused with the Christian doctrine in his poetry and drama have not been scrutinized with the care and attention they deserve.

Thus, in T.S.Eliot, a symposium compiled by Richard March and Tambimuttu, only two of the forty-seven well-known poets and critics have even touched on the Indian side of Eliot. Montgomery Belgion, in his essay, "Irving Babbitt and the Continent," makes the sharp observation that the Buddhism of The Waste Land might have come from Babbitt, but fails to develop his thesis.[1] E.F.C.Ludowyk suggests in his essay, "T.S.Eliot in Ceylon," that Eliot's readiness "to see the object not as it is, but in its symbolic setting, would appeal to readers to whom the idea of Maya is familiar," but he does not elaborate.[2] In T.S.Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands, edited by B.Rajan, Philip Wheelwright alone seems sensitive to Eliot's use of Eastern philosophy in his poetry, but his comments are brief and invite further study along the same lines.[3]

When we come to the books on Eliot, they are either broadly suggestive or uncompromisingly sceptical of his use of Indian philosophy.

Thus, both F.O.Matthiessen and Helen Gardner, in their otherwise admirable works on Eliot, tend to slight the Indian ideas in his poetry. Matthiessen nonchalantly informs us that he has "not yet read the Upanishad from which Eliot borrowed" in The Waste Land, and then goes on to make the astounding claim that it is not necessary to read either the Buddha's Fire Sermon, or the particular Upanishad from which Eliot borrowed in order to understand Eliot's poem.[4] No doubt, Eliot's poems stand on their own feet, but this does not entitle a scholar of the status of Matthiessen to rule out the significance of works he himself has not read. Helen Gardner too is clearly upset by the introduction of Krishna in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages" and considers it an error.[5] Elizabeth Drew is more sympathetic to Eliot's absorption of "a great deal of Asiatic religion and philosophy" in her book, T.S.Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, but her approach is too broad to permit any detailed analysis of Eliot's Orientalism. Also, we get the feeling that Ms.Drew is not too familiar with either Buddhism or Hinduism.[6]

It is true that a few pioneering efforts have been made by some critics to evaluate the role played by Indian philosophical thought in Eliot's poetic development. But, at their best, these efforts are the outcome of partial understanding. Moreover, they are too limited in their scope.

Kristian Smidt, in his meticulous work Poetry and Belief in T.S. Eliot devotes part of a chapter to the discussion of "Oriental Mysticism" in Eliot, but he does not seriously attempt to relate it to Eliot's basic vision of the human condition.[7] Staffan Bergsten, in his fascinating book Time and Eternity, is more interested in the Oriental symbols adapted by Eliot than in the philosophical themes.[8] Herbert Howarth, in his informative book Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, describes Eliot's studies in Indian philosophy and poetry with great enthusiasm, but merely hints at their possible effect on Eliot's poetry and drama.[9] Harold McCarthy is persuasive when he argues that the "noble truths" of Buddhism are discernible in the Four Quartets. But he does not satisfactorily explain why he omits any detailed discussion of the Gita (from which Eliot quotes) from his essay; nor does he attempt to reconcile the Buddhist ideas in the Quartets with Eliot's Christianity and his use of the Gita.[10] Narsingh Srivastava is at the other extreme in his exploration of the ideas of the Gita in the Quartets; for he takes no account of the Buddhist themes and makes no attempt to reconcile them with Eliot's use of the Gita.[11] Baird Shuman's article on the Buddhist influence in The Cocktail Party is well-documented; but it suffers from mis-interpretation due to Shuman's imperfect knowledge of Buddhist doctrine.[12] Among the books written by Indians on Eliot, A.G.George's T.S.Eliot: His Mind and Art and B.Rajan's The Overwhelming Question are noteworthy. But Dr.George's stress is on the existential themes in Eliot,[13] while Dr.Rajan waxes eloquent on what he calls "the poetry of failure" in Eliot.[14] We are left with the uneasy feeling, therefore, that the Indian face of Eliot has not been quite captured and - more important - that no significant attempt has been made to relate it to his basic vision of the human condition.

It is possible to dismiss Eliot's interest in Indian thought as mere "exoticism." Now, "exoticism," according to Mario Praz, is a "sensual and artistic externalization" of the poet, who "invests remote periods and distant countries with the vibration of his own senses and materializes them in his imagination."[15] It has no room in it for a participation mystique, the profoundly internal act of meditation. Hence, exoticism is not indispensable to the poet who indulges a yearning for sensuous delights foreign to his own environment; nor does it truly nourish the creative imagination. When exoticism takes an Oriental turn in a poet, we might expect allusions to such curiosities as dates and pomegranates, cinnabar and lacquer and the mists through which temple bells resound.[16] Such an exoticism, however, is not evident in the mature Eliot. Herbert Howarth writes:

> Eliot has naturalized into English from the Indian literature and the Indian sensibility little, and perhaps nothing, that is decorative. He denied himself the saffron paste, the sesamum seed, the açoka blossom, all the touches of pleasure that the Hindu landscape justified but that would be obviously exotic in a Western poem; all with the exception of images already naturalized in the Western imagination and languages; the unfolding lotus in "Burnt Norton", for example. Perhaps he was kindled not by images of indulgence but by the austere language of old hymns, prayers, runes, and that led him first to the burned coloration of
>
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
>
> and then to poetry almost without adjectives:
>
> REILLY: Let them build the hearth
> Under the protection of the stars.
> ALEX: Let them place a chair each side of it.
> JULIA: May the holy ones watch over the roof,
> May the moon herself influence the bed
>
> where he found the words right for exciting a modern theatre audience to the same feelings - feelings of chill and awe, when the flesh creeps in the presence of the elemental and eternal - that the antique words and rhythms excited in him.[17]

It is no doubt true that the young Eliot was fascinated with the romantic images of the East evoked by Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam and Kipling's Kim. But he tended to veer away from this "exotic" East in his mature poetry and drama. The romantic strains of Omar and the crowded bazaars of Kim's Anglo-India are worlds away from the stern admonitions of the Buddha in the Fire Sermon, the austere counsel of the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad and the metaphysical subtleties of the Gita. It is interesting to note in this connection that Eliot, despite his close association with Ezra Pound, did not share his enthusiasm for the delicate beauty of the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore; even the immense popularity of Tagore's poetry in London for a few years failed to move him.

By his own admission, Eliot preferred "poetry with a clear philosophical pattern" since it satisfied "more of his own needs." Among the poets whom he liked for this reason, he included the "Forest Philosophers" of India.[18] Evidently, he was more attracted to austerity than sensuousness, when it came to borrowing from the East.

Temperamentally, moreover, Eliot was as much inclined to philosophy as poetry. Philosophy figured as prominently as poetry in his formal education. At Harvard, he learnt Sanskrit and Pali for two years, probably in order to acquaint himself with Indian philosophical texts in the original, for he later admitted that though he studied "the ancient Indian languages" and "read a little poetry," he was "chiefly interested in philosophy."[19] According to Herbert Howarth,

> Eliot's success as a philosopher almost decoyed him from literature. . . . He served as an Assistant in Philosophy in the academic years 1912-13 and 1913-14. He figured in the transactions of the University's Philosophical Club and was its president for the years 1913-14. . . . In the Spring of 1914 he decided to go to Germany to complete his training, as many leading American teachers of philosophy had done. The Harvard authorities, who regarded him as a potential light of their Department of Philosophy, planned to advance him rapidly when he came home.[20]

However, Eliot was not a philosopher in the conventional academic sense of the term, intent on expounding his Weltanschauung systematically through logic; indeed, in his poetry he often integrated elements which were logically irreconcilable. He was rather a visionary, passionately seeking a unifying principle of the universe and striving to transcend the flux of time through a mystic union with a timeless Reality.[21]

Now, the "Forest Philosophers" of India and their successors used the Sanskrit word darshana meaning sight or vision to denote philosophy, and by their standards, a philosopher is not a mere "lover of wisdom" but a "rishi" - a seer, a visionary.[22] Darshana, moreover, often resulted in kavita or poetry; thus, the rishi frequently became a kavi too. The words rishi and kavi were even used interchangeably to mean poet, sage, prophet and visionary. Eliot could well be described, therefore, a rishi or kavi from the Indian point of view.

It is again only too easy to discourage any investigation of East-West ideo-synthesis in Eliot by quoting Eliot himself. For, while admitting that he had spent two years "in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lanman" (the author of the Sanskrit Reader and the editor of the Harvard Oriental Series), and one year "in the maze of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods," Eliot maintained that this study left him in a state of "enlightened mystification." What exactly he meant by this clever and ironic statement is debatable.[23] But unfortunately, it is highly quotable and can be effectively used to discourage a Vedantic-cum-Buddhistic approach to Eliot. Still, when the time and effort spent by Eliot in Indian studies is taken into account, it is not unreasonable to conclude that his "enlightened mystification" was not the outcome of a superficial reading of the Gita or of a casual hearing of a series of lectures by a wandering Swami. Moreover, the qualifying adjective "enlightened" suggests that Eliot's adventures in Indian thought were not wholly in vain, and that they were, in fact, quite positive in their outcome. Consequently, his grasp of Indian thought could not have been as tenuous as some critics appear to believe.

As early as 1918, we find him reviewing an obscure little treatise on Indian philosophy called Brahmadarsanam or Intuition of the Absolute by Sri Ananda Acharya for The Egoist. The review, though short, reveals that he was thoroughly at home with Indian philosophical systems, texts and their Sanskrit terminology, and that he felt confident enough to make some sharp critical comments. He wrote:

> A good brief introduction to Indian philosophy is still much to seek. Such a work ought to be both historical and comparative. It ought to draw the line very clearly between the religious intuition, which the various schools of philosophy all assumed, and the interpretations, which are widely diverse; it ought to make quite clear to the Occidental mind the difference between the Vedas and the Upanishads, which are properly religious texts, and the earliest philosophical texts of the primitive Sankhya. There is, though native writers are apt to obscure the fact, as certainly a History of Indian Philosophy as of European; a history which can be traced in the dualistic Sankhya, for instance, from the cryptic early couplets through the commentary of Patanjali to the extraordinarily ingenious and elaborate thought of Vachaspati Misra and Vijnana Bhikshu. There is, moreover, extremely subtle and patient psychology in the later writers; and it should be the task of the interpreter to make this psychology plausible, to exhibit it as something more than an arbitrary and fatiguing system of classifications.[24]

He went on to criticize the author for not developing the historical perspective and for being too concerned "with refuting some of the European scholar's dates." He concluded, however, by commending the author and by drawing attention to a technical subtlety:

> Sri Ananda devotes most attention to Vedanta; but it is good to get a book which discusses the Sankhya at all. It ought to be made clear that Prakriti (Pradhanam) is not equivalent to Matter, but sometimes is almost the sense-data of the Realists.[25]

It is refreshing to encounter such an easy familiarity with an abstruse subject in a Westerner. We find in these comments no trace of either condescension or confusion. Nor is there any ready classification of the entire gamut of Indian thought as monistic or any quick assumption that all Indian philosophical systems revolve around navel-gazing. Instead, we meet knowledge combined with critical insight. We cannot but conclude that Eliot had more than a nodding acquaintance with Indian thought, though he never claimed the whole-hearted enthusiasm of an Irving Babbitt for Buddhism or the technical expertise of a James Horton Woods in Patanjali's metaphysics.

Indeed, Eliot's chief difficulty seemed to be his sentimental reluctance to transcend cultural barriers:

> A good half of the effort of understanding what the Indian philosophers were after - and their subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like school boys - lay in trying to erase from my mind all the categories and kinds of distinction common to European philosophers from the time of the Greeks. My previous and concomitant study of European philosophy was hardly better than an obstacle. And I came to the conclusion - seeing also that the influence of Brahmin and Buddhist thought on Europe, as in Schopenhauer, Hartmann and Deussen, had largely been through romantic misunderstanding - that my only hope of really penetrating to the heart of the mystery would lie in forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European, which, for practical as well as sentimental reasons, I did not wish to do . . . [26]

Such frank scepticism of the significance and even the possibility of any East-West interpenetration seems to rule out the discovery of a "Renaissance Orientale" in Eliot's poetry and drama. But Eliot's statement that he did not wish "to penetrate to the heart of the mystery" clearly implies that he was quite capable of such a penetration; only his fear that his Occidental personality would be destroyed seems to have barred the way. And it must be remembered that the "tale" alone should be trusted and the "teller" taken cum grano salis. It would not be wise, therefore, to assume without careful scrutiny, that Eliot's critical theory and poetic practice agreed with each other completely. Often, artistic achievement and critical speculation do not correspond with each other. Criticism is a highly self-conscious activity, while poetry draws upon a vast store of impressions, memories and intuitions in the sub-conscious mind. Moreover, as Eliot himself admitted, a poet may be influenced even by works and authors about whom he is not overtly enthusiastic or of whom he has no expert knowledge.[27] It is conceivable, therefore, that Eliot's readings in Hindu and Buddhist thought lodged deep in his sub-conscious and surfaced from time to time in his works. Also, in spite of his deprecation of East-West rapprochement, Eliot himself seems to have made the attempt, and he admitted this in no uncertain terms:

> In the literature of Asia is great poetry. There is also profound wisdom and some very difficult metaphysics. . . . Long ago, I studied the ancient Indian languages, and while I was chiefly interested at that time in philosophy, I read a little poetry too; and I know that my own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility.[28]

Apparently, his interest in Indian philosophy ran quite deep. He admitted that he was deeply moved by Buddhist writings: "I am not a Buddhist, but some of the early Buddhist scriptures affect me as parts of the Old Testament."[29] He thought that the Buddha's Fire Sermon "corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount."[30] He declared that "what we learn from Dante or Bhagavad Gita or any other religious poetry, is what it feels like to believe that religion."[31] And he described The Bhagavad Gita as "the next greatest philosophical poem to The Divine Comedy within my experience."[32] Also, he kept a copy of The Twenty-eight Upanishads in his personal library for ready reference.[33]

Nor is it difficult to illustrate the explicit use Eliot made of Indian thought in his poetry; to cite but one example, he brought St.Augustine and the Buddha together at the very core of The Waste Land and noted that "the collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of the poem is not an accident."[34] It was certainly the outcome of something far deeper than "romantic misunderstanding."

It is perhaps useful at this point to make a list of all the direct references to Indian philosophical thought in Eliot's poetry and drama.

The third section of The Waste Land is entitled "The Fire Sermon" and specifically recalls to our mind the Buddha's Fire Sermon from the Maha-vagga. Eliot quotes the words of the Buddha in his poem ("Burning burning burning") and acknowledges his debt in his notes to The Waste Land:

> The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount) from which these words are taken, will be found translated in the late Henry Clarke Warren's Buddhism in Translation (Harvard Oriental Series). Mr.Warren was one of the great pioneers of Buddhist studies in the Occident.[35]

The fifth section of The Waste Land, entitled "What the Thunder Said," makes an equally direct and incontrovertible appeal to the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad. Eliot acknowledges this appeal in his notes to The Waste Land:

> 'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathize, control). The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, 5, I. A translation is found in Deussen's Sechzig Upanishads des Veda, p. 489.[36]

Also, he briefly annotates the last line of "What the Thunder Said":

"Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word."[37]

In "Burnt Norton," the first poem in the Four Quartets, there is a specific allusion to the lotus flower, a symbol of the ultimate Reality in Hindu-Buddhist thought:

> And the lotus rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light . . . (BN, p. 172)

The entire third section of "The Dry Salvages," the third poem in the Four Quartets echoes in a general and unspecified manner the teachings of Krishna in the Gita. At one point, Eliot incorporates an almost literal translation of verse 5 in Chapter 8 of the Gita. Quite characteristically, he adapts the borrowed words to his own purpose. He takes the words which appeal to his imagination, twists them gently to meet his own needs, and weaves them into the texture of the poem:

> At the moment which is not of action or inaction
> You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
> The mind of a man may be intent
> At the time of death" - that is the one action
> (And the time of death is every moment)
> Which shall fructify in the lives of others:
> And do not think of the fruit of action. (DS, p. 188)

In Act II of The Cocktail Party, there is an explicit reference to the "Mahaparinibbana-sutta" of the Digha-nikaya, a sacred text of Buddhism. It occurs in Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly's advice to Edward and Lavinia:

> Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence.
>
> (CP, p. 411)

The statement recurs in Sir Henry's parting address to Celia:

> Go in peace, my daughter,
> Work out your salvation with diligence. (CP, p. 420)

Later, Sir Henry alludes to the statement a third time, when he discusses Celia's destiny with her aunt Julia:

> And when I say to one like her
> 'Work out your salvation with diligence', I do not understand
> What I myself am saying.
>
> (CP, p. 421)

The reference, of course, is to the death-bed exhortation of the Buddha:

> Then the Blessed One addressed the Priests: 'And now, O priests, I take my leave of you; all the constituents of being are transitory; work out your salvation with diligence.'
> And this was the last word of the Tathagata.[38]

We may well ask: precisely why does Eliot include a quotation from the "Mahaparinibbana-sutta" in the midst of The Cocktail Party? Surely, he cannot just be showing off his acquaintance with Warren's Buddhism in Translations.

Unless all these direct references to Indian thought in Eliot's poetry and drama are regarded as mere window-dressing, they must be understood as indispensable parts of organic wholes, indicating a particularly valuable mode of penetration which might uncover the implicit use Eliot made of Indian philosophical themes in his poetry and drama.

Creative penetration which does not strain a text or distort the author's intentions beyond recognition is notoriously difficult. It would be prudent, therefore, to frame certain rules of thumb to go by, to aid us in our interpretation of Eliot's poetry and drama in the light of Vedanta and Buddhism.[39]

Eliot was first and foremost a kavi, concerned with embodying his particular vision of experiential reality in the individual form of his poetry. In other words, he was a "philosophical poet" akin to Dante and Lucretius, whom he regarded not as "philosophers" but as "poets"

> who have presented us with the emotional and sense equivalent for a definite philosophical system constructed by a philosopher - even though they may sometimes take little liberties with the system.[40]

And like Dante and Lucretius, Eliot too had "something to say which is not even necessarily implicit in the system, something which is also over and above the verbal beauty." In short, Eliot's poetry is never deliberately didactic in character and it is vain to look for any systematic exposition of an Eastern or Western world-view in his poetry. Nor is it critically quite legitimate to take him to task for not always foot-noting his implicit use of Eastern or Western mysticism.

This does not mean that Eliot's vision could be understood in isolation, all by itself. For, of no other poet could it be more truly said, _il n'abandonne rien en route_. Eliot wrote with the past in his bones. Consequently, his poetry incorporates many disparate elements under the banner of an all-embracing Christianity, so that ultimately they have to be understood within the context of the Christian tradition.

It is fruitless to speculate whether Eliot's Christianity was affected by his excursions into the realm of the Indian _darshanas_. We are concerned only with the influence of Indian thought on Eliot's works, not on his personal beliefs. Since even the average non-Christian reader is able to appreciate _Ash Wednesday_ or _Murder in the Cathedral_ without being converted to Christianity, Eliot must have been quite capable of being moved by the Indian _darshanas_ without sacrificing his personal faith in Christianity. In fact, he admitted as much: "I am not a Buddhist, but some of the early Buddhist scriptures affect me as parts of the Old Testament."[41] And he declared that "what we learn from Dante or _Bhagavad Gita_ or any other religious poetry, is what it feels like to believe that religion."[42] Many great poets have adopted quite an eclectic approach and borrowed appropriate images and ideas wherever they found them without hesitation; Eliot was merely following in their footsteps.

It is also difficult to say whether Eliot would have been a better poet if he had not been exposed to Indian philosophy and literature. He might have been just as good a poet, though not such a complex one. But certainly, an interesting facet of experience would have been missing from his poetry.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Montgomery Belgion, "Irving Babbitt and the Continent," *T.S.Eliot: A Symposium for His Sixtieth Birthday* (N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 85.

[2] E.F.C.Ludowyk, "T.S.Eliot in Ceylon," *T.S.Eliot: A Symposium*, p. 105.

[3] Philip Wheelwright, "Eliot's Philosophical Themes," *T.S.Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands*, ed. B. Rajan (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1947), pp. 103-105.

[4] F.O.Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S.Eliot*, 3rd ed., (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 51.

[5] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S.Eliot* (London: The Crescent Press, 1949), p. 173.

[6] Elizabeth Drew, *T.S.Eliot: The Design of His Poetry* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 64.

[7] Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in T.S.Eliot* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1949), pp. 166-172.

[8] Staffan Bergsten, *Time and Eternity: A Study in the Structure and Symbolism of T.S.Eliot's* Four Quartets (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1960), pp. 81-84.

[9] Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), p. 203 ff.

[10] Harold McCarthy, "T.S.Eliot and Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 2 (1952), 31-55.

[11] Narsingh Srivastava, "The Ideas of *The Bhagavad Gita* in *Four Quartets*," *Comparative Literature*, 29, No. 2 (Spring 1977), 97-108.

[12] Baird Shuman, "Buddhistic Overtones in Eliot's *Cocktail Party*," Modern Language Notes, 72 (1957), 426-427.

[13] A.G.George, *T.S.Eliot: His Mind and Art* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p. 48.

[14] Balachandra Rajan, *The Overwhelming Question* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 10.

[15] Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (N.Y.: The World Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 200-201.

[16] See for example John Keats' *The Eve of St.Agnes*, ll. 260-265, where a number of Oriental curiosities are mentioned.

[17] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 203.

[18] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to Wilson Knight's The Wheel of Fire (London: Methuen and Co., 1930), pp. xv-xvi.

[19] T.S.Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948), p. 113.

[20] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 213.

[21] Mario M. Rossi's comments on Yeats to Joseph Hone seem peculiarly appropriate to Eliot as well:

> Basically he did not feel philosophy as an abstract speculation nor was he attracted to it by its technical difficulties. He wanted to solve his problems. He wanted to come in clear about his own mind. He wanted to connect thing and image; to prove that the poet's expression goes further than usual vision, reaches - beyond sensation and and word - the intimate transempirical nature of the world, to assure himself that the poet's way of dealing with reality is in fact a metaphysical description of it.

See Joseph Hone's W.B.Yeats (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1943), p. 453.

[22] See A Source Book in Indian Philosophy, ed. S. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. xxiii:

> Indian philosophy makes an unquestionable and extensive use of reason, but intuition is accepted as the only method through which the ultimate can be known . . . One does not merely know the philosophy, one realizes it. The word which most aptly describes philosophy in India is darshana, which comes from the verbal root drs, meaning "to see." "To see" is to have a direct intuitive experience of the object, or rather, to realize it in the sense of becoming one with it. No complete knowledge is possible as long as there is the relationship of the subject on the one hand and the object on the other.

[23] T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1934), p. 43.

[24] T.S.Eliot in a review of Brahmadarsanam or Intuition of the Absolute in International Journal of Ethics, 28, No. 3 (April 1918), 445-446.

[25] Ibid., 446.

[26] T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods, pp. 43-44.

[27] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1933), p. 91.

[28] T.S.Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, p. 113.

[29] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 91.

[30] T.S.Eliot, "Notes on The Waste Land," The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 79.

[31] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 95.

[32] T.S.Eliot, "Dante," Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958), p. 258.

[33] Among the books from Eliot's library now in the Hayward Bequest in King's College Library is The Twenty-eight Upanishads (1906), by Vasudev Laxman Sastri Phansikar. (Printed and published by Tukaram Javaji, Bombay.) Inscribed on the fly-leaf is the following note: Thomas Eliot with C.R.Lanman's kindest regard and best wishes. Harvard College, May 6, 1912. See Helen Gardner, The Composition of the Four Quartets (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 54.

[34] T.S.Eliot, "Notes on The Waste Land," The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 79.

[35] Ibid., p. 79.

[36] Ibid., p. 80.

[37] Ibid., p. 80.

[38] H.C.Warren, Buddhism in Translations (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1963), p. 109.

[39] The term Vedanta literally means "the end of the Vedas," the Vedas being those Indian scriptures which are the most ancient religious writings now known to the world. Within the Indian philosophical tradition, the term Vedanta is applied primarily to the teachings of the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. More generally speaking, the term Vedanta covers not only the teachings of these primary texts, but also the whole body of literature which explains, elaborates and comments upon their teaching. Among the different interpretations of the primary texts, the non-dualistic system of Vedanta expounded primarily by Sankara (c. 788- 820) has been, and continues to be the most widely accepted system of thought among Indian philosophers. By common consent, it is one of the greatest philosophical achievements to be found in the East or the West.

The term Buddhism primarily applies to the teachings of the Buddha. In later times, after the Buddha's death, the Hinayana and the Mahayana Schools of Buddhism came into being.

We have used the Upanishads, the Gita, the works of Sankara, the Sermons of the Buddha and The Dhammapada in our thesis.

[40] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to Wilson Knight's The Wheel of Fire, p. xiii.

[41] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 91.

[42] Ibid., p. 95.

CHAPTER 1

YOUTHFUL IMPRESSIONS

"The child is father of the man . . . "

"The primary channel of transmission of culture," Eliot wrote in Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, "is the family."[1] Eliot grew up in a household devoted to Unitarian philosophy and he once recalled that his family respected practices and beliefs other than their own.[2] Though he had no great sympathy for Unitarianism, he was strongly impressed by its emphasis on tolerance. He once remarked:

> I was brought up outside the Christian fold, in Unitarianism, and in the form of Unitarianism in which I was instructed things were either black or white. The Son and the Holy Ghost were not believed in, certainly; but they were entitled to respect as entities in which many other people believed.[3]

Even after he became an Anglo-Catholic, he retained in himself "the best aspect of Unitarianism, a kind of emotional reserve and intellectual curiosity."[4]

Now, Unitarian philosophy rejects the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity and upholds the idea of God as a formless Supreme Being. It approximates to the Upanishadic concept of Brahman or non-dual Absolute Reality. It is conceivable, therefore, that Eliot was drawn to the "Forest Philosophers" of India because of his Unitarian upbringing. Kristian Smidt comments:

> Eliot's Christianity is strongly tinged with a monist philosophy. We have seen how Bradleyan ideas constantly occur in his poetry. He seems to regard time and timelessness as distinct spheres, but the world of time is merely appearance and illusion. And good and evil are both subsumed in a higher purpose. No doubt, his monism, from a religious point of view, is as much an extension of the Unitarianism in which he was brought up, as it is a remnant of his purely philosophical enthusiasms. He traced his mother's spiritual descent from Schleiermacher, by way of Channing, Emerson and Herbert Spencer. And the philosophy of Schleiermacher is a meeting ground of Absolute Idealism and Unitarianism, just as Harvard University in the last cen-

> tury was a meeting ground of these two closely related schools of thoughts. It may quite well have been in reaction against Unitarianism that Eliot had insisted so urgently on such doctrines as the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist. But in his tendency to see salvation in attaining to the divine union rather than in a divine atonement and forgiveness, his old Unitarianism supported by a monist idealism, may be found to be still alive.[5]

The seed of Eliot's receptivity to Indian thought, therefore, lay deep in his childhood. And the seed took root in a family environment tinged with Emersonian monism.

Of all the family figures behind Eliot, perhaps the most important was that of his mother. Charlotte C.Eliot was a remarkable woman with a cultivated sensibility and a passion for writing. At school, she was regarded "A Young Lady of unusual brilliancy as a scholar" by her teachers.[6] But she was unable to attend university and develop her aptitudes further, for women lacked such opportunities in those conservative days. She also nursed a secret ambition to succeed as a poet all her life. Herbert Howarth comments interestingly on her work:

> All her life she wrote poems, and persevered in the search for editors to print them . . . Her delight in print was clear, for she clipped the columns and pasted them in scrap-books for her children.
>
> In all her work, there are qualities of a true poet. She was not concerned, as many post-Shelleyans were, with rhapsodizing or with colors, but with the shapes of stanzas and the management of metrics and rhyme. She worked to master a stanza and then passed on to experiment with another. For her son the test of a poet has been the power to innovate, and the special interest of a master like Shakespeare is the restless experimentation which refused to repeat a success and made each new drama a new battle with another technical difficulty. T.S.Eliot, Shakespeare,the blind Arabic poet Al Ma'arri, belong to one class of writers. Al Ma'arri has a volume in which he performs, poem by poem, a technical feat which the rules of verse allow but do not require. Shakespeare's approach to drama was of the same order, except that, in addition, he invented the difficulties which he required himself to solve. So with T.S.Eliot. And Eliot's mother had, in a minor degree, this preoccupation with form and the extension of her technical range.[7]

Much to her disappointment, however, her poems went almost unrecognized. She was quick to recognize the literary promise of her seventh son, did all she could to encourage him and "looked forward to the day when he would take his place . . . among his country's most prominent writers and perform the work she had longed to perform and win the acknowledgement she would have most desired to win."[8]

Despite the restrictions imposed on her by the society in which she lived, she had an open mind that tolerated and respected beliefs and practices beyond her own creed. Though a Unitarian by upbringing, she was sensitive to the beauty of the antique church. She took evident pleasure in writing about the Communion Table in Savonarola and celebrated the Jewish festivals in "an admirable sequence of poems."[9] She manifested a tendency, then, to range beyond her ken and widen her perspectives.

Eliot never specifically acknowledged any debt to his mother, there is little doubt that she exercised a strong influence on him. Kristian Smidt, who was personally well-acquainted with Eliot, maintains that "the boy's interest" in poetry was "stimulated by his mother."[10] At any rate, Eliot cared deeply enough for his mother to write to her before the publication of The Waste Land that he had put much of his life in it.[11] Later, he wrote an introduction to her play Savonarola and dedicated to her his volume of essays For Lancelot Andrews the year before she died.

The influence of his mother may be discerned in Eliot's poetry. She often turned to the lives of saints and martyrs to instil her poems with a sense of drama. She wrote three scenes around the imprisonment of Giordano Bruno. In the first scene, Bruno soliloquizes in prison:

> Soul of the world! on thee doth all depend.
> Mysterious power, that mouldest to thy will!
> In the beginning seest thou the end,
> And in the end a mere beginning still.[12]

Are not these lines strikingly similar to the famous opening and ending of "East Coker"? And is not there the same humble resignation to the divine will in "The Dry Salvages"? Confronted by the Inquisitor, Bruno declares with unfaltering courage:

> Upon my brow
> The martyr's crown will rest, and I shall die
> For truth and for the freedom ye deny.[13]

An identical pattern of defiance to material power and martyrdom to a divine cause was worked out at greater length in Savonarola. Savonarola rejects all earthly temptations of human life and love and spurns even the Cardinal's red cap:

> All earthly honours I would fain resign.
> Is this the hat I wish, a hat of red?
> If so then let it be
> The crown of martyrdom upon my head . . . [14]

Essentially, it is a theme Eliot explored much more subtly in Murder in the Cathedral. Savonarola's loyal followers and priests tempt him to physical resistance against his persecutors. Despite his protests, they bar the doors of the cloisters of San Marco and arm themselves against the Compagnacci. But Savonarola compels them to lay down their arms and open the door and suffer his subsequent imprisonment and execution. The resemblances between the deaths of Savonarola and Becket are unmistakable. Since he wrote the introduction to Savonarola, Eliot was clearly aware of its theme. Significantly, Savonarola was published in 1926, and Murder in the Cathedral, nine years later, in 1935.

It is not far-fetched to say, therefore, that the mother's liberal attitude towards other creeds flowered into a richer and more universal outlook in the son. Eliot ventured further afield than his mother's "antique church" and Jewish festivals to include Greek myths, Dante and Vedantic and Buddhist philosophies under his wing.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Emerson was very much in the air when Eliot was growing up. His family had all the works of Emerson and read him frequently. In a short innovative poem, "Cousin Nancy," Eliot good-naturedly commented on the genteel tradition of his people:

> Upon the glazen shelves kept watch
> Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith,
> The army of unalterable law. (CN, p. 30)

Eliot himself later indicated that Emerson's philosophy was "held in high regard" in his family.[15] Eliot may not have cared much for Emerson's transcendentalism. In fact, he recorded his early dissent from Emerson in "Sweeney Erect":

> The lengthened shadow of a man
> Is history, said Emerson
> Who had not seen the silhouette
> Of Sweeney straddled in the sun. (SE, p. 43)

But when we take into account his Unitarian upbringing and his obvious pride in his New England ancestry,[16] it is hard to see how he could have avoided Emerson completely; moreover, he later gravitated to Harvard for his education and Emerson was a palpable presence in the university. In his monograph, T.S.Eliot and Walt Whitman, S.Musgrove convincingly demonstrates that a creative artist may be influenced even by those authors whom he does not admire profoundly and whose works he does not know intensely.[17]

Thus, while Eliot may not have consciously adopted Emerson as a poetic model, he could not altogether have escaped his philosophic influence. At any rate, he must have read his major essays and poems. Now, even a casual reader of Emerson cannot fail to be struck by his love of Oriental philosophies, especially those of the Upanishads and the Gita, from which he quotes profusely to support his monism. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that Emerson stimulated Eliot's subconscious interest in ancient Indian thought and motivated him to undertake Indic studies at Harvard. It is also quite likely that when he later incorporated Indian philosophical themes into his poetry and drama, the ecumenical spirit of Emerson hovered somewhere in the background.

A few examples may be offered to show that probably Emerson and India were closely interwoven in Eliot's memory. Writing on the literary sensibility of the English, Emerson commented:

> That expansiveness which is the essence of the poetic element, they have not. It was not an Oxonian, but Hafiz, who said, "Let us be crowned with roses, let us drink wine, and break up that tiresome old roof of heaven into new forms."
>
> By the law of contraries, I look for an irresistible taste for Orientalism in Britain. For a self-conceited modish life, made up of trifles, clinging to corporeal civilization, hating ideas, there is no remedy like Oriental largeness. That astonishes and disconcerts the English decorum. For once, there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space. I am not surprised then to find an Englishman like Warren Hastings, who had been struck by the grand style of thinking in Indian writings, deprecating the prejudices of his countrymen while offering them a translation of the Bhagavat. (emphasis mine)[18]

Is it by sheer accident that we hear the "thunder" of the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, complete with its Oriental setting and philosophical magnitude in the final section of The Waste Land? Could not Emerson and India have subtly co-existed in Eliot's subconscious and moved him to "Oriental largeness" and "the grand style of thinking"? It seems quite likely, especially when we recall that the "light" of the "Forest Philosophers" is also seen in the opening section of The Waste Land:

> . . . I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (WL, p. 62)

Moreover, "the power that trifles with time and space" is dimly perceived, if not fully grasped, in The Waste Land. And in the Four Quartets, this dim perception deepens into a joyful awareness of "the impossible union" of the timeless with time. (DS, p. 190)

Emerson held that poetry reveals spiritual truth in all objects of nature through oblique suggestion and symbolic representation. He wrote:

> God himself does not speak prose, but communicates with us by hints, omens, inference and dark resemblances in objects lying all around us. (emphasis mine)[19]

An identical thought was expressed by Eliot in "The Dry Salvages" in words that were tantalizingly similar: the saint, he claimed, is constantly aware of "the point of intersection of the timeless with time;" but, for most of us,

> there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
>
> (emphasis mine) (DS, p. 190)

It is significant that Emerson drew support from the Orient for his thesis that poetry could use material objects to communicate spiritual truth:

> This belief that the higher use of the material world is to furnish us types or pictures to express the thoughts of the mind, is carried to its logical extreme by the Hindoos, who, following Buddha, have made it the central doctrine of their

> religion that what we call Nature, the external world, has no real existence, - is only phenomenal. Youth, age, property, condition, events, persons, - self, even, - are successive _maias_ (deceptions) through which Vishnu mocks and instructs the soul.[20]

The third movement of "The Dry Salvages" painstakingly elaborates the "_maias_" or "deceptions" of the phenomenal world and then points to the teaching of Krishna (an avatar of Vishnu) as a positive way out of our time-conditioned existence to the timeless reality of the noumenon.

Bemoaning the spiritual bankruptcy of the times he lived in, Emerson observed:

> A new disease has fallen on the life of man. Every Age, like every human body, has its own distemper . . . our torment is Unbelief, the Uncertainty as to what we ought to do; the distrust of the value of what we do, and the distrust that the Necessity (which we all at last believe in) is fair and beneficent. Our Religion assumes the negative form of rejection . . . A great perplexity hangs like a cloud on the brow of all cultivated persons, a certain imbecility in the best spirits, which distinguishes the period . . . I think men never loved life less. I question if care and doubt ever wrote their names so legibly on the faces of any population. This _Ennui_, for which we Saxons had no name, this word of France has got a terrific significance. It shortens life, and bereaves the day of its light. Old age begins in the nursery, and before the young American is put into jacket and trousers, he says, "I want something which I never saw before" and "I wish I was not I."

Melancholy words. Yet, don't they foreshadow the _malaise_ of the disoriented inhabitants of _The Waste Land_? And is it not significant that a basic tenet of Indian thought is the universality of suffering and that ennui is suffering in its most refined and horrifying form?

Emerson was as much preoccupied as Eliot with man's relation to Time and Eternity. He used a striking nautical analogy to illustrate his point:

> But turn it how we will, as we ponder this meaning of the times, every new thought drives us to the deep fact that the Time is the child of the Eternity. The main interest which

> any aspects of the Times can have for us, is the great spirit which gazes through them, the light which they can shed on the wonderful questions: What are we? Whither do we tend? . . . Here we drift, like the white sail across the wild ocean, now bright on the wave, now darkling in the trough of the sea; - but from what port did we sail? Who knows? Or to what port are we bound? Who knows? There is no one to tell us but such poor weather-tossed mariners as ourselves, whom we speak to as we pass, or who have hoisted some signal, or floated to us some letter in a bottle from afar. But what know they more than we? They also found themselves on this wondrous sea. No, from the older sailors, nothing. Over all their speaking-trumpets, the gray sea and the loud winds answer. Not in us; not in Time. Where then but in Ourselves, where but in that Thought through which we communicate with absolute nature, and are made aware that whilst we shed the dust of which we are built, grain by grain, till it is all gone, the law which clothes us with humanity remains anew? Where but in the intuitions which are vouchsafed us from within, shall we learn the Truth?[22]

The central metaphor of the second movement of "The Dry Salvages" is that of mariners adrift in the sea, desperately toiling to keep chaos at bay and to find a momentary stay against confusion in the ceaseless flux (DS, p. 186). Both Emerson and Eliot were clearly conscious of a timeless reality or noumenon behind all the changing phenomena. Their awareness found expression in language at once abstract and impersonal, language strikingly close to that of the Upanishadic sages:

Emerson:

> Underneath all these appearances lies that which is, that which lives, that which causes. This ever-renewing generation of appearances rests on a reality, and a reality that is alive.[23]

Eliot:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

> I can only say, _there_ we have been: but I cannot say where.
> And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
>
> (BN, p. 173)

Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad:

> That of which they say that it is above the heavens, beneath the earth, embracing heaven and earth, past, present and future, that is woven, like warp and woof, in the ether . . . It is neither coarse nor fine, neither short nor long, neither red (like fire) nor fluid (like water); it is without shadow, without darkness, without air, without ether, without attachment, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without speech, without mind, without light (vigour), without breath, without a mouth (or a door), without measure.[24]

The resemblances are too obvious to need elaboration.

It is clear that Emerson conceived the poet's function to be that of an intermediary between the temporal and the eternal, who penetrates to the unchanging reality behind shifting appearances, including himself:

> The poet contemplates the central identity, sees it undulate and roll this way and that, with divine flowings, through remotest things; and, following it, can detect essential resemblances in natures never before compared. He can class them so audaciously because he is sensible of the sweep of the celestial stream, from which nothing is exempt. His own body is a fleeting apparition, - his personality as fugitive as the trope he employs . . . I think the use or value of poetry to be the suggestion it affords of the flux or fugaciousness of the poet.[25]

Eliot of the _Four Quartets_ would certainly not have quarreled with such a statement. As for the "Forest Philosophers" of India, their entire lives and teachings revolved around such a concept.

EDWIN ARNOLD:

While Emerson might be said to have sparked off Eliot's admiration for ancient Hindu thought, Edwin Arnold might be said to have inspired his early attraction towards Buddhism. He read _The Light of Asia_ as a boy and its epic delineation of the noble and compassionate life of

Gautama Buddha left a vivid and lasting impression on his mind. Much later in his life, he nostalgically recalled the experience:

> I must have had a latent sympathy for the subject matter, for I read it through with gusto, and more than once.[26]

How strong and enduring the impact of the Buddha was on Eliot's imagination may be judged by his study of Buddhist texts in the original Pali under Irving Babbitt at Harvard, by his avowed intention of becoming a Buddhist at the time of writing _The Waste Land_[27] and by his overt as well as oblique references to Buddhist ideas in his poetry and drama.

It is noteworthy that Eliot seems to have had "a latent sympathy" for "the subject matter" of Arnold's poem than for the poem itself. For he does not make any direct reference to _The Light of Asia_ in his works, with one notable exception. In _The Family Reunion_, Harry and his aunt Agatha speak movingly of attaining release from the bondage of change and suffering:

> Until the chain broke . . .
> Until the chain breaks . . .
> Until the chain breaks.
>   The chain breaks.
> The wheel stops.   (_FR_, p. 335)

The closest parallel to these words and images is found in _The Light of Asia_, where the Buddha speaks of release from change and suffering in a comprehensive sermon:

> If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,
> And no way of breaking from the chain,
> The heart of boundless being is a curse,
> The soul of things, fell pain.
> . . . Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels.
> . . . you that live and die,
> and whirl upon the wheel.[28]

No doubt, the mature Eliot vividly recalled what he had read as a boy and almost literally echoed Arnold's phrases in _The Family Reunion_.

RUDYARD KIPLING:

There was another India, remote from philosophic concerns, that exerted a powerful fascination over the young Eliot. This was the "exotic" Anglo-India of Kipling's Kim, with its picturesque land and colourful people, its crowded bazaars, dramatic events and exciting smells! His boyish enthusiasm for Kipling apparently never waned, for he later described Kim as Kipling's "maturest work on India, and his greatest book" and commented on the "reality of his Indian characters":

> In his Indian tales, it is on the whole the Indian characters who have the greater reality, because they are treated with the understanding of love. One is not very loving between seventeen and twenty-four. But it is Puran Bhagat, it is four great Indian characters in Kim who are real: the Lama, Mahbub Ali, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, and the wealthy widow from the North . . . Kipling is of India . . . the first citizen of India . . .[29]

This was high praise indeed, from such a fastidious critic as Eliot who found fault even with Shakespeare's characterization of Hamlet. There was, in fact, something pathetic in the staunch defence Eliot put up for everything that seemed journalistic or objectionable in Kipling, including his racial complex. As early as 1919, we find him seriously discussing the merits of Kipling's verse.[30] In 1944, he wrote a long introduction to his own selection of Kipling's verse and claimed that Kipling was a unique versifier.[31] He even defended Kipling against a charge of anti-Semitism made by Lionel Trilling.[32] Clearly, Eliot never lost his boyish wide-eyed fascination with Kipling's India. When he became aware of the mystical and metaphysical facets of India in his mature years, the Kiplingesque image of India submerged, though not entirely, for at opportune moments it continued to surface. For example, in the fifth section of The Waste Land, there is a vivid description of a torrid landscape parched for water so that the very air seems to pant for rain:

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water
> If there were water we should stop and drink
> . . .
> There is not even silence among the mountains
> But dry sterile thunder without rain
> . . .
> If there were water
> And no rock
> If there were rock
> And also water
> A spring
> A pool among the rock
> . . .
> But there is no water
> . . .
> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant
> The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
> Then spoke the thunder (emphasis mine) (WL, p. 74)

In the famous Jungle Books, we read how the Rains failed and the jungle stream ran dry so that the rock bottom began to show:

> That spring the mohwa tree . . . never flowered. . . . inch by inch, the untempered heat crept into the heart of the Jungle, turning it yellow, brown, and at last black. The green growths in the sides of ravines burned up to broken wires and curled films of dead stuff; the hidden pools sank down and caked over, keeping the last least footmark on their edges as if it had been cast in iron; the juicy-stemmed creepers fell away from the trees they clung to and died at their feet; the bamboos withered, clanking when the hot winds blew, and the moss peeled off the rocks deep in the Jungle, till they were as bare and as hot as the quivering blue boulders in the bed of the stream . . . And the heat went on and on, and sucked up all the moisture, till at last the main channel of the Waingunga was the only stream that carried a trickle of water between its dead banks; . . . a long, lean blue ridge of rock showed dry in the very centre of the stream. . . . The thunder was rolling up and down the the dry, scarred hills, but it brought no rain - only heat-lightning that flickered along the ridges . . . THAT was

> the voice he heard . . . (emphasis mine)[33]

Such a close resemblance in the passages describing the lack of life-giving water cannot be sheer coincidence. Eliot genuinely admired his Kipling and paid the master the sincerest tribute a creative artist could pay another - imitation.

EDWARD FITZGERALD:

The young Eliot was drawn to the "exotic" Orient from yet another direction. Later in his life, he himself recalled clearly

> the moment when, at the age of fourteen or so, I happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's Omar which was lying about, and the almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling which this poem was the occasion of giving me. It was like a sudden conversion; the world appeared anew, painted with bright, delicious and painful colours. Thereupon I took the usual adolescent course with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne.[34]

It is curious that Eliot's adolescent romanticism should have been nourished by his reading of an Oriental poet in translation. But the native literary scene probably did not offer him much in the way of inspiration, as he later admitted:

> Whatever may have been the literary scene of America between the beginning of the century and the year 1914, it remains in my mind a complete blank . . . there was no poet in either century who could have been of use to a beginner in 1908. The only recourse was to poetry of another age, and to poetry of another language.[35]

Apparently, Fitzgerald's Rubiayat, despite its deviations from the original, had enough oriental flavour in it not only to satisfy Eliot's youthful craving for novelty, but also to open up new vistas of romantic poetry to his mind. No doubt, Eliot cast off the spell of romanticism in his later years and became classical in his taste. But there was enough of the "Romantic" alive in him to "still enjoy" Fitzgerald's

Omar, even when he did not hold "that rather smart and shallow view of life."[36] And occasionally, there is a suspicion of the delicate world of Fitzgerald's Omar in Eliot's poetry. The Magus, journeying towards Bethlehem with his two companions, has a moment of nostalgia when he yearns for

> The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
> And the silken girls bringing sherbet. (JM, p. 103)

Neville Braybrooke has recently drawn critical attention to Eliot's juvenalia. While attending Smith's Academy (Eliot was sixteen then), he wrote two stories - "A Tale of a Whale" and "The Man Who Was King." Both have an "exotic" setting in the South Pacific. Why did Eliot choose this locale for his stories? Braybrooke provides a likely answer:

> Two years before then he was fourteen, and at a time when the contemporary poetry of the period meant nothing to him, he read the Rubiayat of Omar Khayyam. The effect of Fitzgerald's translation on him was overwhelming; he later recalled: 'The world appeared anew painted with bright, delicious and painful colors." Yet it was a distant eastern world, and by comparison with it the islands of Hawaii and Paumoto in the Pacific seemed much less remote and closer to St.Louis and New England background. So the exoticism of Omar's world, it would seem, he replaced with an exoticism of his own. . . .[37]

Braybrooke notes, however, that Eliot did not let his imagination run riot, so that economy and precision were the hallmarks of both stories.

The first story is a cross between Melvillean whale-hunting and Stevenson's sea-stories of the South Pacific. The whaling ship in the story gets becalmed off Tanzatatapoo island - an early sign of Eliot's genius for inventing queer-sounding exotic names. A whale is sighted, the ship gives chase and the harpooner, who tells the story, jumps into a boat and shoots his harpoon. The "leviathan" hurls the boat and its crew high into the air; but all three of them, including the harpooner, land on the whale's back and proceed to camp out there comfortably, even to the extent of cooking the flying fish for food! Their only fear is that at any moment the monster may plunge into the deep. All these intriguing little incidents have more than a touch of Sindbad of the _Arabian Nights_ about them!

The second story bears the distinct impress of Fitzgerald and Kipling. It is called "The Man Who Was King" - a distorted echo of the title of Kipling's short story "The Man Who Would Be King." It concerns Captain Jimmy Magruder, a retired mariner, who has a reputation for telling sea-stories. We are told that Magruder is very fond of one particular yarn; each time the old salt spins it, it is embellished with more and more "wonderful incidents."[38] Which of us has not laughed with Mowgli at the wily old villain of the _Jungle Books_, Buldeo, who constantly tells "wonderful tales," each time with "additions and inventions?"[39] Indeed, the "teller of tall tales" in Buldeo seems reincarnated in Old Magruder. In his favourite story, Magruder is washed ashore on the island of Matahiva after a shipwreck. The local king is just dead and the islanders take Magruder's white skin and the sudden arrival to be signs from above and make him their new ruler. He is royally equipped with a fishing boat, a "palace" - "the size of a large woodshed" and a harem.[40] His life consists of bathing, feasting, drinking wine and making love - surely a life-style Fitzgerald's Omar would have envied! But Magruder's bliss is short-lived; he is forced to flee since he can do none of the remarkable feats of his predecessor - like breathing fire and performing the rope trick (was an Indian fakir the _guru_ of the ex-ruler of Matahiva?!)

While attending Smith Academy, Eliot wrote some "romantic" poetry too. In a poem called "A Lyric" (which was resurrected by Richard March and Tambimuttu from the Smith Academy Record for a symposium honouring Eliot's 60th birthday), he speculated on the riddle of "time" and "space" in the exotic vein of Omar:

> If time and space as sages say
>   Are things which cannot be,
> The sun which does not feel decay
>   No greater is than we.
> So why, Love, should we ever pray
>   To live a century.
> The butterfly that lives a day
>   Has lived eternity.[41]

Significantly, the words "time" and "space" were capitalized in Eliot's original manuscript; their metaphysical implications were to preoccupy him for a long time to come. Thus, in "Little Gidding," we find him rephrasing the philosophical conundrum of his early years in a much more sophisticated and memorable manner, without the "romantic" overtones of his teen-age verse:

> The moment of the rose, and the moment of the yew tree
> Are of equal duration. A people without history
> Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
> Of timeless moments.

(LG, p. 197)

The glamour and mystery of the "exotic" Orient gradually gave place to the profundity of its philosophical writings in Eliot's mind. But though he outgrew the naive romanticism of his youth, he retained a warm corner in his heart for the mysterious East of his early years. And this enthusiasm was to break out irrepressibly time and again in a clear, quick and colourful image or phrase in his poetry and drama.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

[1] T.S.Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948), p. 21.

[2] T.S.Eliot reviewing J.Middleton Murray's Son of Woman in The Criterion, 10, No. 41 (July 1931).

[3] The Criterion, 10, No. 41 (July 1931).

[4] The Criterion, 5, No. 2 (May 1927).

[5] Kristian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in T.S.Eliot (Oslo: I Kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1949), p. 211.

[6] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), p. 23.

[7] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[8] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[9] Ibid., p. 31.

[10] Kristian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in T.S.Eliot, p. 4.

[11] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, pp. 34-35.

[12] Ibid., p. 31.

[13] Ibid., p. 31.

[14] Ibid., p. 31.

[15] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to Charlotte C. Eliot's Savonarola (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1926), p. iv.

[16] See Neville Braybrooke's T.S.Eliot (Grandrapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmann, 1967), pp. 9-10.

[17] See S. Musgrove's T.S.Eliot and Walt Whitman (New Zealand: Univ. Press, 1952).

[18] R.W.Emerson, The Complete Writings (N.Y.: William H. Wise and Co., 1929), I, p. 500.

[19] R.W.Emerson, The Complete Writings, II, p. 730.

[20] Ibid., pp. 730-731.

[21] R.W.Emerson, The Complete Writings, I, pp. 87-88.

[22] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[23] Ibid., p. 90.

[24] The Upanishads, tr. F. Max Müller (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1962), pp. 137-138.

[25] R.W.Emerson, The Complete Writings, II, p. 733.

[26] T.S.Eliot, "What is Minor Poetry?" On Poetry and Poets (N.Y.: The Noonday Press, 1961), p. 38.

[27] Stephen Spender, "T.S.Eliot," Encounter (March 1965), p. 130.

[28] Edwin Arnold, The Light of Asia (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 139.

[29] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to A Choice of Kipling's Verse (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), p. 30.

[30] T.S.Eliot, "Kipling Redivivus," Athenaeum, 9 May 1919, pp. 297-298.

[31] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to A Choice of Kipling's Verse, p. 35.

[32] Ibid., p. 37.

[33] Rudyard Kipling, All the Mowgli Stories (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1952), pp. 67-81..

[34] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1933), p. 33.

[35] T.S.Eliot, "Ezra Pound: A Commentary," The Criterion, 13, No.52 (April 1934).

[36] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, p. 91.

[37] Neville Braybrooke, "T.S.Eliot in the South Seas," T.S.Eliot: The Man and His Work, ed. Allen Tate (N.Y.: Delacorte Press, 1966), pp. 387-388.

[38] Ibid., p. 386.

[39] Rudyard Kipling, All the Mowgli Stories, p. 122.

[40] Neville Braybrooke, "T.S.Eliot in the South Seas," T.S.Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 387.

[41] Photographed from the Smith Academy Record in T.S.Eliot: A Symposium for His Sixtieth Birthday (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968).

CHAPTER 2

THE HARVARD YEARS

"In years that bring the philosophic mind."

- William Wordsworth

Eliot's fascination with things Indian may be charted through his years at Harvard. He enrolled at the University in 1906, took his bachelor's degree in 1909 and went on to complete his M.A. in 1910. He spent the next year at the Sorbonne, but then returned to study for three more years at Harvard from 1911 to 1914.

It was during a remarkable period in Harvard's history that Eliot attended the University. According to Herbert Howarth,

> It was Harvard's golden era. At the beginning of this century William James was lecturing; Santayana; Royce; Babbitt; Kittredge; and others who, if their names have sounded less persistently across the world, were almost equally royal. Great teachers, intellectual athletes with a zest for many branches of knowledge, were training their students to their own versatility.[1]

Consequently, the university furnished Eliot with a reservoir of ideas on which he would draw for the next fifty-five years. His mind was powerful enough to elaborate the material his teachers gave him years afterwards.

He was quite an unobtrusive figure as an undergraduate. According to his contemporary at Harvard, William Chase Greene,

> he was recognized as able and witty; not influential, at the time, rather aloof and silent; I used to tell him he reminded me of a smiling Buddha.[2]

His name was seldom in the public eye and even when his occasional poems and prose pieces were printed in the Harvard Advocate, he seemed a quiet and minor talent. A poem called "Circe's Palace" which appeared on Nov. 25, 1908, is particularly intriguing, however, for its oblique references to India in the last stanza, and for its evident signs of growth:

> Panthers rise from their lairs
> In the forest which thickens below,
> Along the garden stairs
> The sluggish python lies;
> The peacocks walk stately and slow . . .

(*CP*, p. 598)

The imagery might almost belong to the romantic agony in its last phase. The "panthers," "the sluggish python," the strutting "peacocks" and "the forest which thickens below" are all pure Kipling. Who can ever forget Bagheera, the fierce panther, Kaa, the terrible python, or Mor, the vain peacock, of the Mowgli stories? From these "exotic," colourful and almost 'decadent' descriptions, the poem moves to a terse concluding statement that arrests our attention by its plainness:

> And *they look at us with the eyes*
> *Of men whom we knew long ago*.

(emphasis mine) (*CP*, p. 598)

A striking image enforcing the theme of *recognition* - one destined to recur in the mature Eliot - among the prickly pears of *The Hollow Men* and in the unreal cities of *The Waste Land*. We can hardly avoid feeling that Eliot is alluding to 'reincarnation' or metempsychosis, a concept that is prominent in Hindu-Buddhist thought.[3] We notice, moreover, that the 'colourful' elements in the poem reside cheek by jowl with the 'austere' ones - an indication surely of the gradual transition in Eliot from a maker of 'exotic' verse into a 'philosophical poet.'

As an undergraduate, Eliot came under the spell of George Santayana, a man of "singular charm" and great personal magnetism, and followed his course on the History of Modern Philosophy. Later, in his first graduate year in Sep. 1909, he elected Santayana's more advanced course, "Ideals of Society, Religion, Art and Science in their Historical Development."

Santayana was committed to Beauty and was liberal in his philosophical outlook. He had the gift of presenting philosophers totally alien to his own orientation and background to their best advantage. He admired Indian philosophy profoundly and could well be described as a latter-day Emerson for the eclectic and sympathetic spirit in which he approached the poetry and metaphysics of India. Ever since he had heard Paul Deussen lecture in the 1880's, he was aware of Indian thought and was eager to include Indian thought in his bird's eye view of the metaphysics of mankind. Indeed, no American has shown a keener appreciation of classical Indian philosophy than Santayana. He observed:

> The first philosophers, the original observers of life and nature, were the best; and I think only the Indians and the Greek naturalists, together with Spinoza, have been right on the chief issue, the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe.[4]

It seems reasonable to conclude that some of this teacher's enthusiasm for Indian thought rubbed off on his pupil, especially when we recall Matthiessen's suggestion that among the Harvard professors, Santayana and Babbitt influenced Eliot most. Certainly, Eliot shared his master's fondness for Spinoza and the Greeks; there is a strong possibility, therefore, that he developed an equal liking for the Indians.

Two facts are noteworthy. One, among the Indian philosophic concepts Santayana discussed frequently in his writings, being, spirit, maya, karma and metempsychosis or transmigration figured prominently. Is it not significant that Eliot dealt with identical themes in his mature poems and plays? Two, Santayana paid Indian philosophy a high compliment by incorporating it not merely into his scholarly writings but also into his more intimate creations, the sonnets. Here too, the pupil seems to have emulated his teacher.

Eliot took his B.A. in three years (at a time when students usually spent four) but without any outstanding record. He completed his M.A. in English literature, however, with distinction in a year. We feel the sparkle of his pleasure in philosophy and English literature as we read through the list of his courses; and we experience a mild surprise when we read this item towards the end of the list - Babbitt's French 17. As Herbert Howarth observes,

> So many courses in English literature, only one in French. But that one, given by Babbitt, provided, of all the courses of the year, the most powerfully formative experience . . . A Babbitt needs an Eliot, and an Eliot a Babbitt.[5]

Much later in his life, Eliot would glowingly acknowledge his debt to Irving Babbitt:

> I do not believe that any pupil who was ever deeply impressed by Babbitt, can ever speak of him with that mild tenderness one feels towards something one has outgrown or grown out of. If one has once had that relationship with Babbitt, he remains permanently an active influence; his ideas are permanently with one, as a measurement and test of one's own. I cannot imagine anyone coming to react against Babbitt. Even in the convictions one may feel, the views one may hold, that seem to contradict most important convictions of Babbitt's own, one is aware that he himself was very largely the cause of them. The magnitude of the debt that some of us owe to him should be more obvious to posterity than to our contemporaries.[6]

In other words, Babbitt was not a mere teacher, "but a man who directed (Eliot's) interests, at a particular moment, in such a way that the marks of that direction are still evident."[7] Indian thought, especially Buddhism, was one interest to which Babbitt directed Eliot.

Much read in Indian philosophy, Babbitt was particularly attracted to Buddhism. He translated The Dhammapada from the original Pali; it was "the fruit of his whole life's devotion to the study of Buddhism" and remains to this day perhaps the finest work of its kind in the

English language.[8] The book contained an "Essay on Buddha and the Occident" in which he deplored the industrial and utilitarian view of life in the West which was gradually sullying the East too. He counselled the West to turn to the authentic teachings of the Buddha, for there the best of the West was preserved without Western theological and metaphysical complications. He claimed that Western philosophy "from the time of Locke" had been a "long debauch of epistemology" and hence had not answered Kant's second question - 'What must I do?' Buddhism, on the other hand, was a path philosophy: it emphasized that one must not merely know the truth but act in the light of truth. With rare insight, he also pointed out that though Christianity and Buddhism might have doctrinal differences, psychologically they were in agreement with each other. He criticized the Western scholar for lacking humility in approaching the wisdom literature of the East:

> The chief obstacle to a better understanding between East and West in particular is a certain type of occidental who is wont to assume almost unconsciously that the East has everything to learn from the West and little or nothing to give in return.[9]

But he did not advocate a blind enthusiasm for everything Eastern. On the contrary, he deprecated such romantic Orientalism; it was made up of "picturesque surfaces" and was the locus of "the bower of dreams" and it led to a "sub-rational spontaneity" as in Schopenhauer, so that the Buddha was converted into a "heavy-eyed, pessimistic dreamer" from "one of the most alert and vigorous figures of whom we have historical record."[10]

Babbitt was the founder of American neo-humanism along with Paul Elmer More, who had earlier studied Sanskrit with him under Charles Lanman at Harvard. It is claimed that the Orientalism of More and Babbitt in their neo-humanism was the first in the United States "based on sound scholarship and an acquaintance with Sanskrit and Pali."[11] Even the clash between the neo-humanists and the modernist literary critics is read as one between an essentially Hindu sense of human values and "a civilization hell-bent for the economic debacle of 1929."[12]

Eliot seems to have adhered closely to his master's footsteps. He fought a life-long battle against the forces of utilitarianism that were slowly undermining spiritual values in the West as well as the East. And heeding Babbitt's advice, he turned to the teachings of the Buddha; in fact, his reading of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* had already prepared his mind to receive them with sympathy. Apparently, he was so captivated by the Buddha's teachings that he even contemplated becoming a Buddhist. He made an austere, cauterizing poetry out of his response to the ascetic spirit of Buddhism, captioned the third section of *The Waste Land* after the Buddha's Fire Sermon and in his major poems and plays subsequent to *The Waste Land* advocated a thorough-going renunciation of the life of the senses. By the time he wrote *The Cocktail Party*, however, his vision had mellowed; the saint's renunciation of the phenomenal world for the freedom *tout court* of *nirvana* was no doubt highly praiseworthy; but the life of the householder in the world, for all its lacunae, had its own excellence, provided it was led in a spirit of self-surrender. Thus, the psychoanalyst in *The Cocktail Party*, bids farewell to his patients in words as true for those who pursue life in the world with discrimination as for those who give it up in a divine cause. They are the words of the Buddha to his monks on the point of death: "Work out your salvation with diligence." - words which were engraved in Babbitt's mind and which were magnificently re-echoed in Paul Elmer More's memoir of his friend. Eliot had probably heard Babbitt quote those words; he had certainly seen them in Babbitt's book, Literature and the American College, which he knew and regarded as important. Evidently, those words, which seized More and Babbitt, also impressed Eliot deeply, so that he put them into wider currency among his theatre audience and readers by incorporating them into his play. Herbert Howarth comments:

> The words which seized More and Babbitt once they met them in their studies with Lanman, and remained with them as a perpetual source of strength, evidently seized Eliot and rang in his mind, and he has put them at the disposal of all of us for our strengthening.[13]

Eliot too compared Western philosophers with Eastern and found them wanting in subtlety. He wrote:

> A good half of the effort of understanding what the Indian philosophers were after - and their subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys - lay in trying to erase from my mind all the categories and kinds of distinction common to European philosophers from the time of the Greeks. (emphasis mine)[14]

Consequently, he was never guilty of assuming that the East had "everything to learn from the West and little or nothing to give in return."[15] And, though he declared himself an Anglo-Catholic later in his life, he was not rigid in his views; he could sense the fundamental truth underlying disparate views of existence, so that his Christianity had room in it for Hindu as well as Buddhist thought. (Thus, the seeker in The Waste Land, lost amidst the debris of a civilization falling apart, turns to St.Augustine, the Buddha and the Upanishads for direction). On the other hand, he did not cleave to his 'strange gods' out of blind enthusiasm; he was quite discriminating in his choices and rightly perceived that following the Indian philosophers in their quest might involve a loss of his Western identity. Recognizing like Babbitt that romantic Orientalism was a cultural cul-de-sac that did not lead to right understanding and action, he steered clear of it; he even sharply criticized

Schopenhauer and other Orientalists for their "romantic misunderstanding."[15]

Clearly, his association with Irving Babbitt strengthened Eliot's predilection for the East and motivated him a couple of years later to take up Indic studies seriously under Charles Lanman and James Woods; it also weaned him away from a romantic yearning for the 'exotic' East to a love of classical Indian philosophy.

After completing his M.A. in 1910, Eliot spent a year in France. Then, he returned to Harvard in September 1911 and enrolled in Charles Lanman's Indic Philology course. Herbert Howarth writes:

> Babbitt and Paul Elmer More had followed it seventeen years earlier. Perhaps Babbitt's example was an incentive to Eliot. Perhaps an image of India, evoked by Kipling had long been attracting him. Perhaps his interest was part of that general recourse to Asia which Disraeli had foretold in Tancred - ' . . . the spiritual hold which Asia has always had upon the North . . . seems to wane at present, but it is only the decrease that precedes the new development' - and which in 1911 was a tendency of Western thought.[16]

According to Howarth, America had been hankering for ancient India for three quarters of a century, striving to break the bonds of Puritan theology. To a people on a frontier, with the unexplored wilderness just beyond their doorsteps beckoning to their spirit of adventure, the occult had an equally irresistible appeal. And because it was tempting, it was ruthlessly suppressed by witch-hunting. But suppression only checked the curiosity; it did not eradicate it. And so, when the spirit of enquiry was reinstituted by the American and French Revolutions, the suppressed curiosity burst out with renewed vigour and spent itself in Eastern studies and practices. The New England Transcendentalists eagerly pursued the literature of the Orient. The craving for esoteric wisdom spread rapidly so that even the uninformed and half-informed began to rummage indiscriminately among the few available texts from India. The hybrid movement exasperated the poets and scholars alike. The pragmatists were exemplified by Ezra Pound, who rejected Indian thought impatiently as formless, "obnubilated."[17] The idealists, on the other hand, advocated a serious, patient and thorough-going study of the popular subject. Among these, Charles Lanman figured prominently; he was perhaps the most knowledgeable scholar of Indian philosophy in his generation.

Charles Rockwell Lanman had studied Sanskrit at Yale under William Dwight Whitney and then had gone to Tübingen to study the Vedas under Whitney's German master, Rudolf Roth. He returned to the United States to teach Sanskrit at Johns Hopkins University for a few years. Then he was called to Harvard by President Eliot to spearhead Indic studies at the University. He led a productive and energetic life, scoured India for Sanskrit and Pali manuscripts, brought them home to Harvard and edited the Harvard Oriental Series. He also edited the journal and proceedings of the American Oriental Society. At the outset of his Harvard career, he prepared a Sanskrit Reader, designed to fulfil "the requirements of unaided private study" and in the hope that the work would help save the literature from undue depreciation and from exaggerated praise."[18] In his presidential address to the American Oriental Society, Lanman advocated an East-West ideo-synthesis enthusiastically:

> The business of us Orientalists is something that is in vital relation with urgent practical and political ends. The work calls for co-operation, and above all things else, for co-operation in a spirit of mutual sympathy and teachableness . . . India with her great learning is eager to adopt modern methods to make that learning available to her own sons and to us, and is ready to join hands with us of the West in order to make her spiritual heritage enrich our too hurried life.[19]

He also commented wryly on the Harvard Oriental Series that it was "especially timely now, when so much of the widespread interest in Buddhism and other Oriental systems is misdirected by half-knowledge, or by downright errors."[20]

Eliot studied Sanskrit and Pali under Lanman for two years and made extensive use of his library. He kept Lanman's Sanskrit Reader in his private library all his life. Apparently, he was imbued with Lanman's passion for correct knowledge of Sanskrit philosophy and literature. We have already seen that he was not content with dilettantism, but made a serious study of Indian philosophical texts even to the point of making critical comments. It is also quite probable that he absorbed Lanman's ideal of East-West *rapprochement*, though he had reservations about its ultimate effect on his Occidental personality.

It was probably around this time that Eliot became acquainted with Henry Clarke Warren's famous *Buddhism in Translations*, which had come out in the Harvard Oriental Series in 1896 and was being used as a standard text at Harvard. Warren, a disciple of Charles Lanman and the initiator of the Harvard Oriental Series, was a fine scholar of Pali as well as Sanskrit and had selected his material chiefly from the renowned Jataka tales, related to the birth of the Buddha, and the *Ti-Pitaka* (Three Baskets or Testaments), the bible of the classical Hinayana school of Buddhism. His translations were felicitous yet accurate, so that even lay readers could grasp the essence of pristine Buddhism without difficulty. (This accounts for the continued popularity of the book even today). No doubt, Eliot captured the original spirit of Buddhism from Warren's translations; when he borrowed from the Buddha's Fire Sermon in *The Waste Land*, he directed his readers to turn to Warren's book, citing it as his source.

Eliot also spent a year "wandering," as he remarked ironically later on, "in the maze of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Horton Woods."[21] Woods too had studied Sanskrit under Lanman and had gone to Berlin to study Indian philosophy under Paul Deussen. He was encouraged in his study of Indian thought by no less a person than William James, "who prophesied that it was a subject which was to grow in interest to philosophers in the years to come,"[22] and, in his turn, imparted an interest in Indian thought to several of his students. A versatile man who taught history, anthropology, philosophy and comparative religion, he had travelled widely in India and Japan and was working on his monumental Yoga System of Patanjali, to be published in 1914, when Eliot became his pupil.

Woods' Yoga System of Patanjali was the first technical and scholarly work on Indian philosophy written by an American professor of philosophy. It was a model of thoroughness and excellence; but stylistically, the work left something to be desired, because so many words were inserted in brackets and parentheses, of which some were Sanskrit and some were English. Perhaps such a style was indispensable for the sake of accuracy in describing a stern discipline of mind control, but it was apt to confuse the lay reader or student with inadequate or no knowledge of Sanskrit. Could it be that the arid and difficult style stifled Eliot's enthusiasm, leaving him in a state of "enlightened mystification?" No doubt, he had studied Sanskrit under Lanman, but to master a language takes time and he might have turned to the study of Patanjali's Yoga in order to sustain his interest. Apparently, the technical subtleties of the work matched by his master's passion for exactitude proved too much for him. Perhaps this was the reason he dropped his Indic studies at Harvard. This seems quite plausible, especially when we compare Woods' scholarly translation with the more recent popular translation by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. The latter proves to be lucid and delightful reading, for the translators have admittedly taken liberties with the structural pattern of the Sanskrit aphorisms, "so that each one becomes an intelligible statement in the English language."[23] Their work may not be a literal translation, but it succeeds admirably in capturing the spirit of Patanjali's Yoga and in stimulating the interest of the beginner. Perhaps their approach is better in translating philosophical works, where the clarity of the message is more important than the correctness of the style. There seems to be some justification for their claim that a literal translation

> has a bad psychological effect on the reader. Being, at first glance, unable to make anything out of the aphorisms themselves, he is apt to decide that the whole subject is too difficult for him. Enough difficulties exist anyway in the study of yoga philosophy. It has been our aim not to increase them unnecessarily.[24]

They might almost be summing up the difficulties Eliot probably encountered in his study of Indian philosophy.

Woods' translation was no doubt authoritarian, but heavy-handed and scholarly, unsuitable for quick and ready appreciation. Apparently, this was what Yeats thought, when he contrasted his view of Woods' Patanjali with Eliot's, in a work of his old age:

> Some years ago I bought The Yoga System of Patanjali, translated and edited by James Horton Woods and published by the Harvard Press. It is standard edition, final, impeccable in scholastic eyes, even in the eyes of a famous poet and student of Sanskrit, who used it as a dictionary. But then the poet was at his university, but lately out of school,

> had not learned to hate all scholar's cant and class-room slang, nor was he an old man in a hurry.[25]

Yeats probably over-estimated Eliot's regard for Woods and assumed that he really savoured every bit of his master's "impeccable" and scholarly translation of the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali. No doubt, Eliot used Woods' Patanjali as a convenient reference work from time to time, but it is conceivable that, as a beginner, he might have found more inspiration in a translation similar to that of Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood.

It is difficult, of course, to estimate precisely how much Eliot benefited from his Indic studies at Harvard. However, the poet Eliot has rendered this problem rather redundant. No matter where, when and why he acquired his knowledge of Indian languages and philosophical literature, he retained, assimilated and incorporated it in his works in a most fruitful manner. And, as late as 1948, he was well aware that his poetry "shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility."[27]

We may conclude, therefore, that the time and effort Eliot spent in his Indic studies at Harvard were not in vain. It is quite clear that his interest in Indian thought was definitely enhanced. But, did he enlarge his perspectives of India beyond his student days? He seems to have done so when he was editing the Criterion. It is appropriate that we now investigate this phase of his 'Indian adventure.'

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

[1] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), p. 64.

[2] Ibid., p. 95.

3 The Hindu-Buddhist belief is that the true self of every being is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body, and that death means the change of this centre from body to body. The true self is not bound by conditions of matter. In its very essence it is free, unbounded, pure and perfect. But somehow it finds itself tied down to matter and goes through several lives full of compulsive action and suffering, until finally it realizes its true identity and attains the peace everlasting.

[4] Dale Riepe, The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1970), p. 103.

[5] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 127.

[6] See Irving Babbitt, Man and Teacher, ed. Frederick Manchester and Odell Shepard (N.Y.: G.P.Putnam, 1941), p. 104.

[7] T.S.Eliot, Princeton Alumni Weekly (Feb. 5, 1937).

[8] Dale Riepe, The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought, p. 100.

[9] Ibid., p. 101.

10 Ibid., p. 102.

11 Ibid., p. 99.

[12] Ibid., p. 100.

13 Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 206.

[14] T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1934), pp. 43-44.

[15] Dale Riepe, The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought, p. 100.

[16] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 130.

[17] Ibid., p. 132.

[18] Ibid., p. 201.

[19] Ibid., p. 201.

[20] Ibid., p. 201.

[21] T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods, p. 44.

[22] Dale Riepe, The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought, p. 92.

[23] How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (Hollywood, California: Vedanta Press, 1953), p. 9.

[24] Ibid., p. 9.

[25] W.B.Yeats in his Introduction to Shree Purohit Swami's Aphorisms of Yoga of Bhagwan Shree Patanjali (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. i.

[26] T.S.Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 113.

CHAPTER 3

THE YEARS OF THE CRITERION

"Voyaging through strange seas of thought . . . "

- William Wordsworth

The material an editor selects for publication in his journal often reveals the disposition of his mind, his attitudes and beliefs. And, almost imperceptibly, his views filter down to his contributors through his selections over the years, so that they begin to emphasize points dear to his heart.

Eliot launched the Criterion as a quarterly in October 1922; almost suspended its publication when he lost his sponsor in 1925; revived it under Faber's patronage in 1926, issued it as a monthly in 1927; cut it back to a quarterly in June 1928, and then published it steadily until January 1939.

Both his sponsors, Vicountess Rothmore and the Faber Board, were extremely generous and understanding; they provided him with funds and left him to his own devices. For sixteen long years, therefore, the Criterion was his autocracy. But the autocrat committed himself to free inquiry, free debate and opened his journal to genuine scholarship regardless of controversial attitudes and beliefs among his contributors. With his intellectual range, he perceived the bearing of distant subjects on each other and created a journal that surveyed the cultural scene throughout Europe and America, the developments in music and the visual arts as well as literature, politics, philosophy, anthropology and psychology. Through the pages of the Criterion, he strove to communicate his thoughts to Europe and America, seize the attention of the perceptive minority in every country through whose efforts grace is diffused through civilization. Thus, he hoped to advance Europe's sense of a common tradition and of its yet untapped potentialities as a cultural unity.

The influence of Eliot the editor on his contributors is obvious as we go through the articles and reviews of the Criterion. Less obvious but equally important is the influence of the contributors on their editor. Herbert Howarth's comments are particularly interesting in this context:

> Eliot was scrupulous beyond the custom of periodical autocrats. This does not mean that he badgered his authors for revisions and refinements. It means that he read and meditated on everything that went in. To study the files is to feel the play of one mind in every issue, and the continuity of thought from one issue to the next; to see how he found in his contributors the provocation for new contributions and sometimes the names of new contributors, whom he approached with commissions right for their aptitudes and his pages; and how sometimes the themes or the perceptions of the articles penetrated his mind, lodged there, irritated and pearled years later in a passage of his own. This is true alike of his earliest and latest contributors, but perhaps the earliest led him to his most remarkable discoveries.[1] (emphasis mine)

It should be profitable, therefore, to discuss some of the more important articles that appeared in the Criterion and have a bearing on the cultural heritage, philosophy and the contemporary socio-political situation in India.

Here is a list of the articles and reviews focussing on various aspects of India directly or indirectly:

1. T.S.Eliot, "The Waste Land," V. I, No. 1, Oct. 1922, p. 50-64.
2. Stanley Rice, "Alcestis and Savitri: A Suggestion," V. I, No. 4, July 1923, p. 385-401.
3. E.M.Forster, "Pan," V. I, No. 4, July 1923, p. 402-409.
4. May Sinclair, "Jones' Karma," V. II, No. 5, Oct. 1923, p. 43-56.

5. E.M.Forster, *A Passage to India*. Book review by I.P.Fassett. 1, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 137-139.

6. Henri Massis, "Defence of the West," 4, No. 3 (April 1926), 224-244 and No. 4 (June 1926), 476-493.

7. Stanley Rice, "Hindu Music," 4, No. 3 (June 1926), 538-551.

8. Bonamy Dobree, "Rudyard Kipling," 6, No. 6 (Dec. 1927), 499-515.

9. a) Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*.
   b) Arthur Mayhew, *The Education of India*.
   Book reviews by K. de B. Codrington.
   6, No. 6 (Dec. 1927), 559-564.

10. *Khub Dekhta Age: "India Tomorrow."*
    Book review, anonymous.
    7, No. 3 (March 1928), 285.

11. John Gould Fletcher, "East and West," 7, No. 4 (June 1928), 295-305.

12. Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah, "The Meeting of the East and the West," 7, No. 4 (June 1928), 306-324.

13. a) Saval Zimand, *Living India*.
    b) Earnest F. Neve, *A Crusader in Kashmir*.
    c) Robert Smith Wilson, *The Indirect Effect of Christian Missions in India*.
    d) Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity and the Government of India*.
    Book reviews by K. de B. Codrington.
    8, No. 33 (July 1929), 356-358.

14. a) *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*.
    b) Edward J. Thompson, *The Reconstitution of India*.
    c) Sir John Simon, *Two Broadcast Talks to India*.
    Book reviews by K. de B. Codrington
    10, No. 39 (Jan. 1931), 356-358.

15. a) Margaret Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*.
    b) Francois Malaval, *A Simple Method of Raising the Soul to Contemplation*.
    Book reviews by Algar Thorold.
    11, No. 43 (Jan. 1932), 358-361.

16. Hoffman Nickerson, "Irving Babbitt," 13, No. 51 (Jan. 1934), 179-196.

17. Elliot Smith, *The Diffusion of Culture*. Book review by K. de B. Codringon. 13, No. 51 (Jan. 1934), 340-342.

18. R.K.Yajnik, The Indian Theatre: Its Origins and Its Later Developments Under European Influence. Book review by K. de B. Codrington. 13, No. 52 (April 1934), 523-525.

19. W.B.Yeats, "Mandookya Upanishad," 14, No. 57 (July 1935), 547-559.

20. Ananda V. Rao, A Minor Augustan. Book review by K. de B. Codrington. 14, No. 55 (Jan. 1935), 350.

21. Irving Babbitt, The Dhammapada, translated from Pali with an essay on Buddha and the Occident. Book review by Philip S. Richards. 16, No. 62 (Oct. 1936), 123-128.

22. Philip S. Richards, "The Religious Philosophy of Paul Elmer More," 16, No. 63 (Jan. 1937), 205-220.

23. Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself: Autobiography. Book review by Orlo Williams. 16, No. 65 (July 1937), 683-685.

24. Betty Heimann, Indian and Western Philosophy: A Study of Contrasts. Book review by T.W. 17, No. 68 (April 1938), 588-591.

25. H.G.Rawlinson, India. Book review by Ronald Duncan. 17, No.69 (July 1938), 775-777.

At first glance, we are struck by the considerable number of the writings on India and the frequency of their appearance in the Criterion. Is it not significant that the editor found so much space with such regularity in his journal for discussions about a country and culture so distant from his own milieu? The fact that he chose so many articles and reviews, affording varied perspectives on India reveals his continued and lively interest in India beyond his student days. We can also see the breadth of this interest in India from his selections: they range from the totally mundane reality of chewing "Pan" (pronounced pa:n - a preparation of betel leaves, areca nuts and lime used for chewing in the Orient) to the high flights of metaphysical speculation on karma and reincarnation, the nature of Hindu music and the quality of wisdom in the Alcestis and Savitri myths.

ALCESTIS AND SAVITRI:

One of the earliest issues of the Criterion (July 1923) carried a contribution by Stanley Rice: "Alcestis and Savitri," a comparative study of a Greek and an Indian myth from an anthropological-cum-literary point of view. By comparing the Alcestis story with that of Savitri in the Mahabharatha, Rice answered the usual objection to the dithyrambic Hercules in Euripedes' play Alcestis:

> . . . how, it is said, can we recognize in this drunken reveller the semi-divine hero of Greek legend? He comes into the house with importunate demands for service, calls for wine, and drinks himself into a maudlin state, "crowning his head with myrtle sprigs" and "howling discordance," and later giving the servant a sermon of drunken solemnity on the vanity of human life.[2]

The comparative study ought to have attracted the editor's attention, for it reconciled two of his warring interests, the Attic and the Indic; its anthropological approach and the philosophical and literary points it raised should have added spice to its appeal.

It is likely that the article also tugged at the dramatist in Eliot. For, according to Herbert Howarth, it "makes a point the editor retained for twenty-five years and then put to use in The Cocktail Party. . . . The article must have . . . brought the Heracles of Euripedes into sharp focus in his mind."[3] Howarth suggests that Sir Harcourt-Reilly, the clinical psychologist in The Cocktail Party is cast in the mould of Heracles:

> Harcourt-Reilly submits to religion, acts in the name of religion - no heresy founts from him - and confesses with humility that he speaks more than he knows:
>
> And when I say to one like her
> "Work out your salvation with diligence," I do not understand
> What I myself am saying.
>
> Nevertheless, he imposes an immense authority. A practicing

> analyst once remarked to me, after one of the early performances of the play, that he is far, far too august and godlike. But after all he is the semi-divine Hercules - the dithyrambic Heracles, rollicking with irrational strength.[4]

It is true that Sir Harcourt breaks into a tavern song after a few glasses of gin à la Heracles. But, in this drunken revelry, he is only a pale shadow of the boisterous original in Euripedes. In fact, he is far too serious, "august and godlike" to be totally identified with "the dithyrambic Heracles, rollicking with irrational strength." Rather, he resembles the serene and compassionate Buddha, who points out to each individual a different path suited to his or her temperament so that he or she may attain salvation.

Rice's article might have evoked the Alcestis myth and brought Heracles sharply into focus in Eliot's mind, as Howarth claims. It did so, however, in the light of its Indian parallel. Would it not have inspired Eliot to fashion Sir Harcourt with at least a suspicion of India about him? As a matter of fact, there is a strong suggestion of the Buddha in the august manner and speech of Sir Harcourt. His serene, God-like attitude is unmistakable even in the earlier part of the play, when he is unidentified. His profession as a clinical psychologist too is significant, for the Buddha (or for that matter Krishna) was, in his own way, a master psychologist, who well-understood the contrived corridors of the human mind. And, above all, the words Sir Harcourt uses - are they not the very words of the Buddha to his disciples on his deathbed, urging them on their primal task of seeking nirvana?

Moreover, an Indian note is struck in the very opening lines of the play:

Alex: You've missed the point completely, Julia:

There *were* no tigers. *That* was the point.
Julia: Then what were you doing up in a tree:
You and the Maharaja?

(*CP*, p. 353)

A little later, Alex boasts of an art he acquired "in the East" - the ability to concoct "a toothsome meal out of nothing." He speaks of "a handful of rice and a little dried fish," of "mangoes" and "curry powder" - food items which are all typically Indian. These tell-tale details clearly show that Eliot wanted to introduce an Indian element in his play. He did so, by furnishing it with a Hindu-Buddhist philosophical framework. But, of this more later.

It is quite possible, moreover, that the correlation of the Greek and Indian myths in Rice's article inspired Eliot ~~to~~ *suggest* a collocation of the Attic and the Indic in his play, by casting Sir Harcourt in the mode of the semi-divine Heracles as well as the saintly Buddha.

HINDU MUSIC:

Stanley Rice contributed yet another article on Indian culture to the *Criterion* in June 1926. Under the title, "Hindu Music," he compared Indian classical music with its Western counterpart. He attempted, in a scholarly and sympathetic manner, to clear up the misconceptions surrounding Indian music in the West and to establish its genuine spiritual qualities. He quoted Tagore at length:

> In the song of the nightingale, he went on, in answer to a question, a Hindu would find the soul state of the listener; he would make music in the same way that Keats wrote his ode. It seems to me that Indian music concerns itself more with human experience as interpreted by religion than with experience in an everyday sense. For us music has above all a transcendental significance. It disengages the spiritual from the happenings of life; it sings of the relationship of the soul of things beyond. The world by day is like European music; a flowing concourse of vast harmony composed of concord and discord and many disconnected fragments. And the

> night world is our Indian music; one pure, deep and tender raga. They both stir us, yet the two are contradictory in spirit . . . We men of India live in the realm of the night: we are overpowered by the sense of the One and the Infinite. Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of everyday human joys and sorrows, and takes us to that lonely region of renunciation which lies at the root of the Universe, while European music leads us a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy.[5]

Rice went on to pay a glowing tribute to the Indian attempt to reveal the noumenon beyond the fleeting phenomena through music. "The search for the Infinite," he wrote, "has been the age-long preoccupation of thoughtful India, the attainment of Release from the bondage of the flesh her most ardent desire."[6] This passionate yearning for freedom from bodily restraint and the adoration of the Infinite by the human spirit, Rice perceived, not only animated Indian music, but also irradiated Indian sculpture; his observations were thought-provoking:

> In sculpture, as in music, the Indian looks upon the mere imitation of Nature as something paltry and trivial, unworthy of the true genius of man. The perfection of the human form which made so strong an appeal to Greek aestheticism, does not appeal to him at all. He looks beyond the form to the spirit behind the veil of the flesh, and sometimes only to the idea of which the form is a symbol. That is why the figure of the Buddha is not Gautama, but the Impersonation of the Contemplative Mind, the dancing Siva is not the god but the embodiment of cosmic motion, the praying Hanuman not the Monkey God but the Spirit of Devotion. The multiplication of arms represents Omnipotence or Divine Energy, of heads Omniscience or Divine Wisdom. The Indian cares little for form, though in music the innate conservatism has retained the old rules and the old structure; but as he scorns to imitate Nature in his sculpture, so he scorns to depict her in music. Nor does he confine himself to Nature; he would equally scorn the descriptive music which suggests merely the low doings of man . . . Rapt in his own divine art of music, he would fain fade away into the forest dim. . . .[7]

Obviously, Rice had a rare sensitivity to Indian sculpture and music. It seemed to him that traces of the influence of Indian music could be detected in the modern art of Europe, so that the "so-called formlessness of many recent compositions" was probably not formlessness at all, but "a new kind of form to which we have not grown accustomed," a form ultimately derived from Hindu music. At any rate, it was beyond dispute that Russian music had greatly influenced modern European music. And there was "considerable affinity" between Russian folk-song and Oriental music. Hence, he found it difficult to resist the conclusion that the music of Europe was looking towards the East through "the eyes of a people that is more than half-Asiatic."[8]

That Rice admired Indian culture intensely is quite evident from the tone of his writing. Whether or not his editor wholly shared his enthusiasm is a moot point. We may venture, however, to draw a parallel between India's "age-long preoccupation" with "the search for the Infinite" and Eliot's life-long groping towards the still point of the turning world, and between the apparent "formlessness" of Indian art and the montage of seemingly disconnected images and incidents in much of Eliot's poetry.

KARMA AND REINCARNATION:

The Criterion carried an important piece connected with Indian philosophy in October 1923. It came from the pen of the gifted poet and novelist, May Sinclair, and was her second story to appear in Eliot's journal. Called "Jones' Karma," it dealt with one of the basic preoccupations of Indian philosophy - karma and its effects.[9]

May Sinclair was a distinguished writer, with an impressive number of books to her credit. She was quite conversant with Indian philosophy and expressed a great enthusiasm for Tagore in her Defence of Idealism, which was published in 1917.

When Eliot was a sophomore at Harvard in 1907, he had perhaps noticed a review of May Sinclair's new book in the Advocate. In 1916, when he was in London, nursing his poetic talent, he found that the people he regarded highly held her in high esteem and developed a respect for her feminist progressive views. Later, she co-sponsored with Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington the Bel Espirit circular on behalf of Eliot. In July 1918, her Defence of Idealism was reviewed at some length by M.W.Robieson for the International Journal of Ethics; Eliot's own review of E.D.Fawcett's The World as Imagination appeared in the same issue. Now, young writers, perhaps all writers, notice the work of others if it appears beside their own. It might be safely assumed that Eliot read May Sinclair's Defence of Idealism, especially since she dealt with Bradley (on whom Eliot had written his doctoral dissertation) and mysticism, Eastern and Western. According to her reviewer, Robieson, her conclusions were "plainly intended to be in harmony with those of Mr.Bradley;" he particularly praised her chapter on The New Mysticism and judged that "nothing she has written is more interesting than the contrasts she draws between eastern and western mysticism."[10] May Sinclair criticized Western mysticism for "its persistent asceticism" and attacked Christianity for being "unclean and profane in its repudiation of the earth."[11] Eliot may not have agreed with her undervaluation of Christian asceticism, but he must surely have felt the force and originality of her argument. She found that

> the Christian mystics, "admirable psychoanalysts as they were," lacked the psychological theory and practice which the Indian mystics possessed; and they failed, but for one or two exceptions . . . to achieve a perfect and safe detachment from the world. Similarly, the religious poets of the West failed by comparison with those of the east. Western religious poetry was seldom written by poets, was not supremely devotional, was a horrible tangle of material and carnal imagery; it

> imagined the throne of God, but never arrived; and it never appeased "your finer metaphysical hunger."[12]

Impressive conclusions and provocative in the extreme. Did they perhaps act as an irritant and stimulate Eliot to produce a religious poetry which really arrived at the throne of God and appeased "the finer metaphysical hunger?"

When the *Criterion* began to float in 1922, May Sinclair's writing was very much in Eliot's eye. She was working for the New York *Dial*, his immediate model; she wrote in one of her reviews in February 1922 that the poet who created new beauty is entitled to expect his readers to make an effort to understand his unfamiliar style - a remark sure to have pleased a poet who had the mind-staggering *Waste Land* ready for publication. During the summer he read her own attempt at new beauty, *Harriet Frean*, and reviewed it favourably for the *Dial* in September 1922. The following month, he published her story, "The Victim," in the first issue of the *Criterion*. Shortly afterwards, in October 1922, he published "Jones' Karma."

In "Jones' Karma," May Sinclair made creative use of the Indian philosophy she had read while writing the *Defence of Idealism*. A Guru, who is staying as a guest in an English household, is asked to resolve a philosophical conundrum: how can a man's will be free, if his fate is determined? He replies with a parable. Jones makes three wrong decisions in his life, thereby jeopardizing his soul. At the moment of his death, he clearly perceives his errors and their results, and wills that he should make the right decision in his next incarnation at the three moments of choice. He is able to do as he had willed at the moment of his death. But, still the ultimate consequences are disastrous. For, he had focussed only on three particular moments and sought to remedy his errors; he had not looked at the entire pattern of his life and willed a transformation of his whole self; he had spent his will on a minor enterprise.

Perhaps this was too simplified a version of the subtleties of the Indian philosophers. Apparently, however, this philosophical _tour-de-force_ arrested Eliot's attention and set him pondering on the riddle of human conduct for a long time to come. Nine years after the publication of "Jones' Karma," in July 1932, while reviewing Queenie Leavis' _Fiction and the Reading Public_ for the _Criterion_, he said that poetry as well as drama was a permanent need of man and that poetry might revivify the drama. Then, in a swift transition of thought, he spoke of the experience of "St.Peter when the cock crew "and commented:

> This kind of determinism is essential to Buddhism as well as Christianity; but whether "determinism" is the right word for it, I leave unsettled. See _Jones' Karma_ by May Sinclair in the _Criterion_ for Oct. 1923, p. 43.[13]

We can hardly avoid noticing that his mind seems to have run off in several directions at once. First, the "unsettled" question: could Peter have avoided his denial of Christ? Or was it foreordained? Next, the sudden flash of insight: man forges his destiny by the exercise of his own will, but his past conditions his present, in the Western or Eastern perspective. And last, the implicit conclusion: Peter's situation is of fundamental importance, existential and archetypal, occurring time and again under different guises, bound by an inexorable law of _karma_ - worth exploring, therefore, through poetic drama.

It must be admitted that "Jones' Karma" is by no means an extraordinary story. Even so, Eliot alluded to it in a striking and specific manner nine years later. Surely, this means that he was keenly interested in the _concepts_ embodied in the story; free-will and pre-destination, freedom and bondage, *karma* and its effects, the importance of choosing correctly at the moment of death and the necessity of cultivating detachment in order to attain *nirvana*. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the most pregnant statements of the Guru in "Jones' Karma" should have embedded themselves in Eliot's memory and surfaced from time to time in his works. For instance, the Guru and the narrator have an interesting conversation at the beginning of the story:

> "Still, it comes to this," I said: "if you could live your life again in the same circumstances, I take it you would do the same things. Nothing would be different. And you would not be free."
> "You would not be free," the Mahatma said, "to do the same things."
> "But each thing would be predictable."
> "Predictable, yes. But that is not your concern. It is not you who predict."
> I persisted. "No, but the possibility of prediction would mean that I was doomed, not free."
> "There you are again," said the Mahatma, "with your pairs of opposites. It would mean that you were doomed *and* free. You come to the cross-roads. *I* know which turn you are going to take. You take it. But you were free to take the other."
> "Not if you know, Guru."
> "Why not? My knowledge has no hold on you. There is no path from my knowledge to your action, Bikkhu."
> "Talk about living your life again," said Grigley, "who *would* live it, if they knew?"
> "I would," I said, "if I were free to live it differently; if when the wrong turn came I could take the right one."[14]

It is a vivid thought and must have intrigued Eliot. Seven years later, in 1930, in *Ash Wednesday*, a poem full of the Christian spirit of repentance, he speaks plaintively of his yearning to be free of taking any more turns:

> Because I do not hope to turn again
> Because I do not hope
> Because I do not hope to turn
> Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
> I no longer strive to strive towards such things . . .
>
> (*AW*, p. 89)

What is his reason? The turns he takes do not transform his self; they merely perpetuate his karma, so that he encounters the same situation again and again in different forms:

> At the first turning of the second stair
> I turned and saw below
> The same shape twisted on the banister
> Under the vapour in the fetid air
> Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
> The deceitful face of hope and despair.
>
> (AW, p. 93)

But he is painfully aware that he may be forced to turn again and yet again by his own karma, committing fresh mistakes like Jones. He prays for release, therefore, from the bondage of his own past deeds:

> Although I do not hope to turn again
> Although I do not hope
> Although I do not hope to turn
>
> Wavering between the profit and the loss
> In this brief transit where the dreams cross
> The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and death
> . . .
> Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden
>
> Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
> Teach us to care and not to care
> Teach us to sit still
>
> (AW, p. 98)

In other words, he seeks the compassionate yet detached (caring for others and not caring for the self) attitude of the Buddha, who is almost always represented in painting and sculpture as "sitting still" in the lotus posture of meditation.

The Guru in "Jones' Karma" contends that an individual may change the course of his destiny by exercising his will at the moment of death:

> "It is not impossible," the Mahatma said, "Time is nothing. Or it is everything. You can go forward or you can return on the path of time. You have only to will it so at the moment of dying. For, as the wish formed at the moment before sleeping is powerful in the waking life of the next

> day, so the wish formed in the moment before dying is all-powerful in the next life. People do not know how important that moment is, so they do not will."[15]

The Guru speaks in the light of Buddhism, but the concept holds good in Hindu thought too. Thus, we find Krishna declaring in the Gita:

> And whoever remembers Me alone when leaving the body at the time of death attains to My status of being; there is no doubt of that.
> Whatever state of being he remembers, upon giving up his body at the end, to that he attains, O son of Kunti; always being formed in that state.
> In action only hast thou a right and never in its fruits. Let not thy motive be the fruits of action; nor let thy attachment be to inaction.[16]

The words of the Guru and Krishna must have reverberated ~~in Eliot~~'s mind. Years later, in 1941, he fused them together brilliantly in the central movement of "The Dry Salvages":

> At the moment which is not of action or inaction
> You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
> The mind of man may be intent
> At the time of death" - that is the one action
> (And the time of death is every moment)
> Which shall fructify in the lives of others;
> And do not think of the fruit of action. (DS, p. 188)

The resemblances are too obvious to need elaboration.

Towards the end of "Jones' Karma," the Guru comments incisively on the nature of free-will and pre-destination:

> " . . . when you talk of free-will and bondage you talk of the pairs of opposites. You are free and you are bound also. It is according. But so long as you affirm the reality of the pairs of opposites you are subject to illusion.
> He paused.
> "Notwithstanding, there is the path of perfect freedom. When it is indifferent to a man whether he is himself or not himself, whether he lives or dies, whether he catches the cholera or does not catch the cholera. Thus he escapes from desiring and undesiring, from the pairs of opposites, and from the chain of happenings and the round of births.[17]

A persuasive argument, even when read in isolation. And highly convincing if read as the culmination of the Guru's parable. At one end of the scale, this "path of perfect freedom" coincides with Dante's peace in the will of God. At the other end, it does require the individual to make the right choice. His accumulated karma is bound to have its effects, good and bad. Nevertheless, if he chooses to act in a spirit of self-surrender, giving up the fruit of action, he will be free of the good as well as the evil effects of his karma and attain nirvana or the peace that passes understanding. A Peter, then, may not avoid the act of denying Christ (just as Arjuna cannot avoid the act of fighting his kinsmen), because it is the result of his own past deeds, the fruit of his karma. He can, however, choose to detach himself from the fruit of his action; his little egotistic self must die and at the moment of death he must will the transformation of his entire being into an instrument of God; then, he might find repose in the peace of God's will. Eliot must have been struck by the Guru's wisdom and learnt from it, especially since it was in psychological accord with the teachings of Krishna and Christ. Thus, the "unsettled" question of 1932 and the ideas he had assimilated from the Guru, reinforced by his reading of the Gita, hover suggestively over the slow central movement of "Little Gidding." But with a difference. May Sinclair's Guru uses the word "indifference," which is usually understood as carelessness or insensitivity, to denote the renunciation of the fruits of action. Eliot prefers the word "detachment" - a word commonly used in books on Indian philosophy, including May Sinclair's own Defence; thus, he is free to use "indifference" in the ordinary sense of the term. It is a remarkable illustration of the creative use he made of the words and ideas of other creative artists:

> There are three conditions which often look alike

Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and growing
between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives - unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:
For liberation - not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past. (LG, p. 195)

"Detachment" here means serenity (like the Guru's) or balance of mind (like Arjuna's) and leads to the freedom of nirvana. "Indifference," on the other hand, is negative; it stands for the incapacity to love (such as that which bedevils the life of Edward and Lavinia in The Cocktail Party till they have learnt to overcome their little egotistic selves). And the freedom of nirvana does not spell the end of love; instead, it enables one to pass beyond carnal love (kama) to universal love or compassion (karunya) akin to that of Christ, Krishna or the Buddha.

Herbert Howarth draws our attention to the fact that certain contributors to the Criterion (such as Mario Praz and T.O.Beechcroft) stressed a discrepancy between poetry and mysticism. We have seen that May Sinclair charged Western religious poets with the profanation of the love of God with carnal imagery and mourned the lack of a supremely devotional poetry in the West. Eliot seems to have answered all of them by writing the Four Quartets, a poem void of sensuality and supremely devotional in tone, bridging the East and the West in its concepts and drawing poetry and mysticism together, without sacrificing familiar scenes from everyday life, such as the fishermen toiling desperately against the sea for survival.

"Jones' Karma" seems to have produced striking echoes in Eliot's drama too. Towards the end of the parable, there is an interesting debate over the three turning points in Jones' life and *karma*:

> "And you expect me to believe, Guru," said Grigley, "that the man's will was free."
> "Most certainly, Bikkhu, it was free. No will but his own compelled him to betray Peter, and seduce Sarah, and leave Denby to die. In these three deeds he had made his own Karma. And through his free will he refused those deeds the second time, yet at the third time his Karma compelled him to their accomplishment."
> "How do you make that out?"
> "Because in dying he had willed only to undo the actual deeds done in one place and one time; not to resist the same temptation at all times and all places. And those final turning points he neither remembered nor had forsaken, so that his Karma had the power to repeat itself."[18]

Jones *recognizes* the *three* critical deeds in his life, *feels contrite* and *resolves* to undo them in his next incarnation. What do we see in *The Elder Statesman*, the play of Eliot's old age? We witness a similar *recognition* and *contrition* on the part of Lord Claverton for the *three* crucial acts in his life: he too has betrayed a friend, seduced a girl and left a man to his death. And when he is confronted by his former friend and mistress in his later life, he acknowledges them for what they are - the fruit of his *karma*:

> They are merely ghosts:
> *Spectres from my past*. They've always been with me
> Though it was not till lately that I found the living persons
> Whose ghosts tormented me, to be only human beings,
> Malicious, petty, and I see myself emerging
> From my spectral existence into something like reality.
>
> (emphasis mine) (*ES*, p. 569)

Unlike Jones, however, Lord Claverton does not merely resolve to make amends for his particular misdeeds; instead, he confesses them to his daughter, gives up all pretense and dares to be the man he really is. In other words, he encompasses the death of his false egotistic self by a deliberate act of his will. This brings about a transformation in his life; he ceases to impose his desires on his children, thereby attains freedom from attachment and begins to love:

> I've only just now had the illumination
> Of knowing what love is. We all think we know,
> But how few of us do! And now I feel happy -
> In spite of everything, in defiance of reason,
> I have been brushed by the wing of happiness . . .
> I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone:
> And in becoming no one, I begin to live.
> It is worthwhile dying, to find out what life is.
>
> (ES, p. 581)

His karma no longer has the power to repeat itself, for he has worked out his salvation with diligence.

EAST AND WEST:

Not all the contributions on India to the Criterion were favourable to its people and culture; some were quite critical, even caustic. It is evident that the editor tried to strike a balance between writers who extolled India and those who denigrated India. It is interesting to note, however, that the praise was almost always connected with classical Indian thought and came through articles, while the blame was focussed mainly on contemporary Indian politics and socio-economic evils and appeared in book reviews. If we accept that the Criterion reflected its editor's predilections to some extent, the inference is clear: Eliot was as much drawn to ancient India as he was left unmoved by contemporary India. We may, therefore, reasonably expect his poetry and drama to reveal his predilection for classical Indian thought, and little or no trace of his concern with contemporary Indian problems.

One particularly long article called "The Defence of the West" by Henri Massis, which appeared in two consecutive issues of the Criterion (April and June 1926) raised a storm of controversy. Massis saw Western civilization in crisis, undermined by Asiaticism. He wrote:

> It is the soul of the West that the East wishes to attack, that soul, divided, uncertain of its principles, confusedly eager for spiritual liberation, and all the more ready to destroy itself, to allow itself to be broken up by Oriental anarchy, because it has of itself departed from its historical civilizing order and its tradition. On the pretext of bringing us what we need, a certain kind of Asiaticism is disposing us to the final dispersal of the heritage of our culture and of all that which enables the man of the West still to keep himself upright on his feet. Personality, unity, stability, authority, continuity - these are the root-ideas of the West. We are asked to break these to pieces for the sake of a doubtful Asiaticism in which all the forces of the human personality dissolve and return to nothingness.[19]

He denounced German scholars like Oswald Spengler, writers like Hermann Hesse and savants like Count Keyserling for predicting the decline of the West and looking to the East for inspiration. He deplored the "veritable craze for books on the language, philosophy, art and peoples of Asia;"[20] the wave of enthusiasm for the "fakir-like stammerings of Rabindranath Tagore" in Munich he found distasteful.[21] He maintained that Germany had turned its back on the West and looked to the East due to two reasons: one, she had suffered a humiliating defeat in the first World War and wished to take "an intellectual revenge on the classic West that conquered her;"[22] two, the Greco-Latin culture was not "a fundamental asset of civilization" for Germany, for she had not "shared its past to the point of becoming identified with it."[23]

Turning further afield, Massis attacked Russian intellectuals for disowning the West and embracing the East. He saw the Russian nation as essentially barbarian and held that "the Russian people have made almost no contribution to civilization."[24] Russia, he maintained, was currently reverting to its atavastic Eastern tendencies, and creating Bolshevism, which was merely an Asiatic lust for conquest under the mask of idealism.

In other words, Germanic and Russian Asiaticism, according to Henri Massis, concealed a political end:

> Asiatic Pantheism, transplanted to Berlin, assumes the guise of a warlike claim; Russian communism, which was based fundamentally on the Tolstoyan doctrine of non-resistance to evil, becomes everywhere a conquering Slavism; behind the Hindoo chant, the rhythm of rebellion and wrath may be heard. Because the problem is spiritual in the first place, we are apt to fail to see these harsh realities, or to be ready to give ear to the false prophets who persuade us to a catastrophic conception of the Universe.[25]

Indeed, the very concept of individual personality that resulted in the magnificent achievements of Western civilization was being threatened by Asiatic wisdom, which had its end "in the final dissolution of personality." Massis went on to make some sweeping generalizations:

> The necessary consequence is the annihilation of human activity . . . Balance of thought and action . . . is the quality proper to the West, its authentic philosophy. Pessimism and distaste for effort are the distinctive marks of the Asiatic. But the kernel lies in 'depersonalization,' the aim and end of his effort, whether he seeks it in salvation, deliverance from the whirlwind of continual reincarnations, the pain of successive rebirths, or whether he destroys the illusion of consciousness, or frees himself from the material, emotional and intellectual ego in order to contemplate the divine soul.[26]

Such pernicious doctrines, he concluded, must be resisted with all might wherever they were found in the West. On the whole, it was a powerful polemic, bound to arouse interest if not agreement. But the high-flown rhetoric concealed a basic flaw: a total misapprehension of classical Indian philosophy. Massis made the same mistake, which many Western thinkers from the time of Schopenhauer had made before him. He read his own despair at the collapse of civilization in post-War Europe into Hindu-Buddhist thought and called them pessimistic and static.

Massis' astringent views on the East did not go unchallenged. In the very next issue of the Criterion (October 1926), in a civil and yet firm letter, John Gould Fletcher pointed out the fallacies in his argument and showed clearly that it was a hysterical outburst based on ill-digested ideas and unscholarly subjectivity. He demonstrated that Massis had often twisted historical facts to fit his own thesis that Western civilization was threatened by Asiaticism. He concluded with a plea for a saner and more balanced view:

> It seems to me far more important that Western thought should learn to draw a clear distinction between scholasticism and humanism, than to go on worrying ourselves with the increasing interest in Asiatic art and literature displayed in Germany and elsewhere. To me, the West and East are two complementary poles necessarily interacting upon each other . . . if it is necessary for the European spirit to make some headway against growing Asiaticism - and I would add also, Americanism - it is no longer possible to do so solely on the basis of a narrow Graeco-Latin culture.[27]

And, in January 1927, in a scholarly letter to the Criterion, significantly titled "In Defence of the East," Vasudeo B. Metta questioned Massis' ready assumption that the Greco-Roman-European civilization was the only worthwhile civilization and supplied a necessary corrective. He maintained that the West had been influenced by the East from the earliest period in its history and had profited enormously: Greco-Roman sculpture had been nursed in its infancy by Egyptian and Assyrian sculpture; Plato and Pythogoras had imbibed wisdom from India and Egypt; Christianity itself, a major cultural force in the West, was an Eastern religion, and Christ an Oriental of Orientals - in fact, because of its radical difference from Greco-Roman concepts, it had to struggle hard to establish itself in Europe; and Europe's vaunted 'humanism' and liberal spirit of enquiry had stemmed from the Arab universities of Sicily and Spain. He advocated that the East and West could learn from each other, with mutual benefit. He maintained that the East could beneficially influence the West in the realm of art and made some very interesting comments:

> There is another thing that the East can teach the West, and that is that what matters in art and literature is not form but spirit. . . . Greek architecture and sculpture are made too much of in the West, because they have attained an undeniable perfection of form. But what message do they convey to the soul of man? Does anyone feel overwhelmed by a sense of grandeur or ecstasy when looking at the Parthenon as one does when looking at the Pyramids, the Alhambra, or the Taj? What significance has Venus de Milo for us? Nothing - except that of extreme gracefulness of posture and beauty of lines. But look at the dancing Siva of India. It is full of meaning; it is bursting with an exalted message for the soul of man. It symbolizes the triumph of Spirit over Matter, the purification of Man's Inner Self by right thoughts and right deeds. . . . It is because Greek sculpture has no message for the spirit of man that Christian Europe instinctively turned away from it in the Middle Ages and evolved another form of sculpture to suit itself.

Metta maintained that the Renaissance, by reviving the Greek love of form, had merely bequeathed a chaos of artistic ideals to present-day Europe. Instead of forming one community bound together by one great ideal of art, the artists had severed their connection with each other and developed their own individual ideals and methods. Consequently, modern European art had become less and less informed by the spirit. Metta went on to make a few sharp observations on the relation between tradition and individuality in art:

> There can be no really great art unless it is inspired by the spirit . . . Eastern countries have stuck to one great, essentially spiritual ideal in art through the ages . . . Europe is like a child who does not know its own mind. . . . The development of individualism in the West . . . has made the poet and artist overvalue himself. Instead of looking upon himself as the mouthpiece of God and of his fellow-beings, he is inclined to look upon himself as God and consequently look down with contempt upon his fellow-beings. With such notions in his head about himself, it is but inevitable that he should discard tradition. Now tradition is the soul of his race, and if the poet or the artist discards the soul and wants to create within his own lifetime another tradition, he is bound to fail . . . When art was regulated by tradition in Europe - as in ancient Greece and the Middle Ages - the artists worked con-

> scientiously to materialize their highest feelings and aspirations for the good of the community. You therefore do not see frantic attempts at 'originality' in artists of those times. Many a work that the pupils of a great master executed, so resembled that of the master himself, that you could not easily say which was the master's and which the pupil's. But now it is different. The majority of artists today would consider it a mortal insult if they were told their work resembled that of someone else. The great truth, therefore, which the East can teach the West is - Individualism lowers but tradition exalts art.[29]

A persuasive argument. Especially dear to the heart of an editor, who had championed tradition as a cultural force that shapes individual talent.

Eliot may not have shared wholly any of the views of his contributors. But it is unlikely that he took Massis' warning that the East was overwhelming the West seriously; indeed, Massis must have seemed the very type of Occidental Babbitt was wary of, one who assumed that the West had everything to give and the East little or nothing to give in return.[30] Eliot probably inclined towards the views of Fletcher Metta, if only because they were closer to the ideal of East-West rapprochement upheld by Babbitt. At any rate, he continued to incorporate the Vedantic and Buddhistic ideas which Massis had attacked. We may conclude, therefore, that he was quite sympathetic to bringing the East and the West together.

This view is reinforced by the fact that, barely a year after the controversy provoked by Henri Massis had died down, in June 1928, he simultaneously published two articles advocating an East-West ideo-synthesis in the Criterion: "East and West" by John Gould Fletcher and "The Meeting of the East and West" by Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah. They appeared side by side in the same issue, apparently by design of the editor. And, at least one of them had all the appearance of having been specifically requested by the editor. Fletcher was a regular contributor and his reply to Massis' "Defence of the West" had been balanced and scholarly. Was Eliot moved to ask him to write a longer article along the same lines?

Fletcher rejected Massis' assumptions that "the Greco-Roman civilization was sacred in itself, "that there was no civilization worthy of its name beyond the charmed circle of the Mediterranean and North Sea basins" and that Europe would be marred by any contact with the East.[31] He argued that the East and West had come together closer than ever before by historical and commercial developments and that this encounter provided the West with an opportunity for self-examination in the light of Eastern culture. The typical Occidental, he maintained, sees "life as a fundamentally dynamic activity, a life-force, a Heraclitean fire, a conquest of inertia and shapelessness," so that he is constantly striving to overcome the forces of nature; the Oriental, on the other hand, seeks "the harmony of stability" and directs his will inwards to the conquest of the self rather than outwards to the conquest of life and nature.[32] Consequently, "non-resistance to nature, letting things take their own course, is the first precept of Oriental morality; social agitation, making things better is the first precept of Occidental morality."[33] This radical difference of attitude between the East and West almost inevitably raised a question in Fletcher's mind, which he attempted to answer in terms of the Gospels:

> So the question arises and demands an answer: which of us has done the most towards achieving that final absolute of human perfection we both desire? Which of us has chosen 'the better part?' This last phrase reminds me of the fact that there is something on the subject in the Gospels. When I look up the passage in question, I am confounded. For there it is said of Mary who waited for the Lord's coming and of Martha whose 'soul was cumbered with many things,' that Mary had chosen

> the better part. And it seems to me that the East, with its stress on inward contemplation, has played the part of Mary, while the West, with its insistence on outward activity, has only too often been akin to poor, foolish, blundering Martha.[34]

In short, Fletcher preferred the "Oriental ideal of contemplative stability" to the "Occidental ideal of dynamic vitality," the Yogi to the Commissar.

The notion of choosing "the better part," the contemplative rather than the active self is as old as the Upanishads. No one who has read the principal Upanishads carefully can fail to be struck by the parable of the two birds, one calm and self-contained and the other restless and self-indulgent, and by the idea of *shreyas* and *preyas*, the ideal and practical sides of human nature, in conflict with each other.

The editor who had spent two and a half years at Harvard familiarizing himself with Sanskrit philosophy and literature, was no doubt familiar with the Upanishadic speculation on the two selves; and as a conscientious Christian, he must have felt quite at home with the parable of Mary and Martha. Fletcher's views, therefore, probably struck a sympathetic chord in his soul.

It is noteworthy that long before he launched the *Criterion*, Eliot had toyed with the idea of two conflicting selves in *Prufrock*. He might, therefore, have selected Fletcher's article for publication, due to an inner preference for his views. Conversely, Fletcher might have strengthened his own predilection for an Oriental frame of mind.

At any rate, Eliot stressed the contemplative aspect of man in his plays. Becket, Harry, Sir Harcourt Reilly, Lord Claverton - they are all cast in the same introspective mould, so much so that they seem to be *bodhisattvas*, the different incarnations that preceded the coming of the Buddha in Buddhist legend.

We note in passing that Fletcher concluded his essay with a plea for East-West co-operation in battling the mechanical view of life and saving "some fragments and remnants of humanity from the worst evils of the machine-age in which we live" - a cause close to the heart of the author of The Waste Land.

Essentially the same plea was voiced by the other article, "The Meeting of the East and the West," which appeared along with Fletcher's in the Criterion. Written by an Indian Muslim, it rejected Kipling's notorious claim that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" as false, and convincingly argued that the East-West encounter was a fait accompli and a continuing process:

> It was from the East that civilization entered Europe, flowing along trade routes from the cradles of civilization in Egypt and Babylonia. The spiritual and intellectual life of Europe has an Eastern basis . . . Even Science, which is regarded as essentially Western, is Eastern in origin. Astronomy has emerged from the debris of Babylonian astrology . . . Western clocks tick out Babylonian echoes, for time is measured on the Babylonian system. The very world is measured by the Babylonian degrees. Europeans use the Egyptian calendar as adjusted and readjusted in Rome. Geometry was invented by the Pharaoh's pyramid builders. The Brahmanic Indians gave the world Algebra, and the Arabs carried it westward. . . . Who would be so bold as to assert that East and West are so far apart when all that the West cherishes is rooted in the East? East and West met ages ago and still meet, and Time has made the East in our own day the heavy debtor of the West.[35]

In short, the East and West were far more akin to each other in the intellectual and spiritual realms than was usually recognized. Shah considered it essential, therefore, to cultivate mutual sympathy and build more bridges between the East and West.

The theme of East-West rapprochement was also sounded in a couple of book reviews. Philip S. Richards, writing on Irving Babbitt's The Dhammapada in October 1936, drew attention to his essay on "Buddha and the Occident," in which Babbitt had compared Christianity and Buddhism in order to arrive at a new synthesis. We have already dwelt upon the remarkable similarities between the views of Babbitt and his disciple. No doubt, Richards' review refreshed Eliot's memories of Babbitt's liberal attitudes and eclecticism.

Another review that would surely have engaged his attention appeared in April 1938. Written by T.W. on Betty Heimann's _Indian and Western Philosophy: A Study of Contrasts_, the review spotlighted India's "cosmic outlook," which the book had painstakingly interpreted, and went on to speculate on the possibility of integrating Eastern and Western world-views:

> The Indian mind revels in paradoxes, some of which are paradoxical merely to the foreign eye. India's conception of life is at once dynamic and unhistorical, her _Nirvana_ is at one instant of thought All and None (compare perhaps the mathematical zero as the 'productive point of indifference'), while her transcendentalism is a continuation of, not an escape from, her appreciation of measurable things (_Maya_). And yet India knows no antitheses, only polarities; she unites both elements in what we should regard as an antithesis into a single unit. It is an old Brahman saying that the atom and the ocean are more comparable than anything in between; and in India is found an extreme multiplicity of definition which resolves _per se_ into an all-inclusive unity of non-definition, a unit of concept or of contemplation.[36]

The review concluded that India could reveal to the West two valuable conceptions: "a more inclusive conception of Unithood" and "a realization of higher, more inclusive and resolvent levels of conception itself." And the review closed with the observation that only on such higher and inclusive levels could any valid balancing and fusion of East and West take place. It was an implicit challenge to the creative imagination of a poet who took his vocation seriously.

That Eliot picked up the gauntlet, we know. And we now have sufficient grounds for believing that he was well-equipped for such an enterprise. But how well did he succeed in integrating the East and West in his poetry and drama? What philosophical problems did he encounter and how did he resolve them?

We shall attempt to answer these questions by a thematic analysis of Eliot's poems and plays and by a study of his major symbols.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

[1] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), p. 250.

[2] Stanley Rice, "Alcestis and Savitri: A Suggestion," The Criterion, 1, No. 4 (July 1923), 385.

[3] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 265.

[4] Ibid., p. 266.

[5] Stanley Rice, "Hindu Music," The Criterion, 4, No. 3 (April 1926), 547.

[6] Ibid., 548.

[7] Ibid., 549.

[8] Ibid., 550-551.

[9] See Eliot Deutsch, The Bhagavad Gita (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 12, for a lucid explanation of the term karma:

> The term karma means 'deed', 'work', 'action' and is used in the Hindu tradition to mean both any action which produces tendencies or impressions (sanskaras) in the actor, which then function as determinants to his future action, and specific ritual actions which are performed in the context of Vedic ceremonial religion. Further, according to most of the Indian philosophical systems, karma suggests a 'law'of moral nature which holds that actions necessarily produce effects and that this enacted over a period of innumerable births, deaths, and rebirths. Every action must produce its results - if not immediately, then at some future time - and every disposition to act is the result of one's past action. One is completely responsible for oneself. A man's present condition is the result of his past action over many lives, and his future condition will result from his past and present action.

[10] M.W.Robieson in his review of May Sinclair's Defence of Idealism in the International Journal of Ethics, 28, No. 4, 566.

[11] May Sinclair, Defence of Idealism (London: Faber and Faber, 1917), p. 248.

[12] Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, p. 273.

[13] T.S.Eliot, The Criterion, 11, No. 45 (July 1932), 681.

[14] May Sinclair, "Jones' Karma," The Criterion, 2, No. 5 (Oct. 1923), 43-44.

[15] Ibid., p. 44.

[16] See Eliot Deutsch, The Bhagavad Gita, p. 78 and p. 42. That Eliot admired the Gita profoundly is beyond question. He regarded it as the second greatest philosophical poem in his experience, the first being The Divine Comedy. In Jan. 1937, while discussing the proper application of religious faith in life, Eliot observed that there are times when good and bad seem equally distributed, so that it is difficult to see clearly where one's duty lies. And he recalled the case of the warrior-hero of the Gita:

> That balance of mind which a few highly civilized individuals such as Arjuna, the hero of the Gita, can maintain in action, is difficult for most of us even as observers.

See The Criterion, 14, No. 63 (Jan. 1937), 290.

[17] May Sinclair, "Jones' Karma," The Criterion, 2, No. 5 (Oct. 1923), 57.

[18] Ibid., 56.

[19] Henri Massis, "Defence of the West," The Criterion, 4, No. 3 (April 1926), 231.

[20] Ibid., 232.

[21] Ibid., 232.

[22] Ibid., 235.

[23] Ibid., 237.

[24] Ibid., 241.

[25] Henri Massis, "Defence of the West," The Criterion, 4, No. 4 (June 1926), 492.

[26] Ibid., 490.

[27] Letter to the Editor by John Gould Fletcher, The Criterion, 4, No. 5 (Oct. 1926), 749.

[28] Letter to the Editor by Vasudeo B. Metta, The Criterion, 5, No. 1 (Jan. 1927), 103.

[29] Ibid., 104-105.

[30] See Chapter 2, p. 42.

[31] John Gould Fletcher, "East and West," The Criterion, 7, No. 4 (June 1928), 295.

[32] Ibid., 309-310.

[33] Ibid., 311.

[34] Ibid., 311.

[35] Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah, "The Meeting of the East and the West," The Criterion, 7, No. 4 (June 1928), 328-329.

[36] Review by T.W. of Betty Heimann's Indian and Western Philosophy: A Study in Contrasts, The Criterion, 17, No. 68 (April 1938), 589.

PART II

IN THE LIGHT OF VEDANTA AND BUDDHISM

CHAPTER 4

IMPERMANENCE AND SUFFERING

> Action is transitory, - a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle, this way or that -
> 'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
> We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
> Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
> And shares the nature of infinity.
>
> \- William Wordsworth

Poetry, religion and philosophy are no doubt quite distinct from each other in the abstract, and may be regarded as having different functions. But, in the concrete, they overlap considerably, so that a poem, without ever ceasing to be an aesthetic-emotional structure, may carry both religious and philosophical overtones. For, at their loftiest and sublimest, poetry, religion and philosophy spring out of certain fundamental intuitions, which are keenly experienced and felt to be of cosmic significance. These intuitions themselves are quite immediate, though their consequences may be far-reaching; for, out of them may evolve emotional visions with an imaginative logic of their own. These emotional visions may become religions or complex theologies; systematized logically, they may even be called philosophies or elaborate world-views; but as emotional visions, they are poetry.

One valuable mode of penetrating the work of a philosophical poet or kavi like Eliot is by way of the key intuitions underlying his poetry. By comparing these key intuitions with those of Hindu-Buddhist thought, we may not only perceive the deep influence of Vedanta and Buddhism on Eliot's Weltanschauung, but also gain some insight into his basic vision of the human condition.

The fundamental intuition of Vedanta as well as Buddhism is that of impermanence (or ephemerality) of all phenomena and of the universality of suffering. These notions are, of course, quite universal. They are to be found in Ecclesiastes and The Book of Job; in the New Testament, we find Christ and his disciples repeatedly urging us to give up the things of this world since they do not have a lasting value for the human soul. One of the chief characteristics of seventeenth century English literature - a main source of literary inspiration to Eliot besides Dante - was its acute awareness of the transience of life and the tyranny of time.

However, in Vedanta and Buddhism, the notions of impermanence and suffering are fundamental intuitions, not ideas among other ideas; they are the bedrock on which entire philosophical systems rest. They are, moreover, closely associated with metempsychosis.[1]

Impermanence, when fully grasped, is found applicable to the knowing subject as well as to the objects perceived; the seer and the seen are both ephemeral, so that individuality or ego is at best a product of the mind, an illusion. Suffering, when fully understood, is found inseparable from existence in the world of phenomena.

Thus, the words of Krishna to Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra echo through the corridors of time:

> From the world of the senses, Arjuna, comes heat and comes cold, and pleasure and pain. They come and they go; they are transient.[2]

The same perception is even more emphatically re-echoed in the words of the Buddha:

> Whether Buddhas arise, O priests, or whether Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact and the fixed and necessary constitution of being, that all its constituents are transitory. Whether Buddhas arise, O priests, or whether Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact and the fixed and necessary consti-

> tution of being, that all its constituents are misery. Whether Buddhas arise, O priests, or whether Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact and the fixed and necessary constitution of being, that all its elements are lacking in an Ego.[3]

Indeed, in Vedanta and Buddhism, the transitoriness of life is even identified with suffering, so that suffering and impermanence are but complementary aspects of a single fundamental intuition.[4]

Christianity too is imbued with a tragic sense of suffering and of the fleetingness of the things of this world. It finds a despondent expression in the "Catholic philosophy of disillusion" of Dante, which consists in not expecting "more from _life_ than it can give or more from _human_ beings than they can give, to look to death for what life cannot give."[5]

No sensitive and thinking person can, in fact, avoid perceiving that this intuition is rooted in our everyday experience of the world, in which birth and death, growth and decay, hope and despair are repeated _ad infinitum_ and combine to produce a spectacle of suffering in which nothing remains stable and everything is in a state of flux.[6] The very best of our experiences are ephemeral, our most exquisite moments are flawed and fragmentary.

In a little-known article he wrote in 1928, E.M.Forster dealt interestingly with Eliot's early poetry and _The Waste Land_. Then, he made a very significant and perceptive comment on his philosophy of life:

> In respect to the horror that they find in life, men can be divided into three classes. In the first class are those who have not suffered often or acutely; in the second, those who have escaped through horror into a further vision; in the third, those who continue to suffer. Most of us belong to the first class, and to the elect outside it our comments must sound shallow; they may feel that we have no right to comment at all. The mystics, such as Dostoievsky and Blake, belong to the second class. Mr.Eliot, their equal in sensi-

> tiveness, distinct from them in fate, belongs to the third. He is not a mystic. For Lancelot Andrewes contains several well-turned compliments to religion and Divine Grace, but no trace of religious emotion. Is he relegating it to another place? No, if it exists, it cannot be relegated. He has not got it; what he seeks is not revelation, but stability.[7]

Forster spoke more truly than he realized. For, the notion of impermanence and suffering haunts much of Eliot's poetry.

An awareness of the evanescence of life was present in Eliot as early as 1905, when he passed out of Smith Academy; in a sentimental poem he wrote to mark his graduation, he pauses to philosophize:

We go; like flitting faces in a dream;
Out of thy care and tutelage we pass
Into the unknown world - class after class,
O queen of schools - a momentary gleam,
A bubble on the surface of the stream,
A drop of dew on the morning grass . . .

(AG, p. 594)

This vague disquiet over 'the passing show' is not short-lived. It reappears twelve years later in "The Lovesong of J.Alfred Prufrock" with an ironic overtone and a sharper outline; the hazy indistinct feeling of his early youth has crystallized into a deep anxiety over the meaningless flux of life in which there are no stable and reassuring landmarks:

For I have known them all already, known them all -
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffeespoons

(LP, p. 14)

Events repeat themselves endlessly so that the outcome is mere vacuity or boredom. Prufrock is acutely conscious of time passing and of his life slipping through his fingers, without his ever daring to break free of his inhibitions and regain the truth of his innermost self:

There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet:
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

(LP, p. 14)

The very insistence of Prufrock's assertion betrays his inner uncertainties. He may persuade himself that there is enough time for him to make critical decisions that could transform his life, but ironically there would be no time, with old age and death inexorably creeping up on him. Prufrock is aware of this in his heart of hearts and is scared. But he is unable to muster up his courage and ask "the overwhelming question":

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
                    brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet - and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

(LP, p. 15)

Literally and metaphorically, he is enveloped in an ever-swirling fog, in which the outlines of people and incidents are blurred and their features indistinct; he cannot connect with them in any meaningful manner, so that he is oppressed by loneliness and boredom. Unable to cope with the harsh realities of his urban existence, he takes refuge in nightmarish fantasy or in day-dreams:

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.
. . .

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids sing each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

(LP, p. 16-17)

The images of his dream-world - "the ragged claw," the mermaids _et cetera_ - are all sharp, concrete and exact, in contrast to the flowing concourse of his day-to-day world. Consequently, he finds his dream-world reassuring and would fain linger "in the chambers of the sea /By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown." (LP, p. 17) But it is impossible thus to escape the flux of existence, however meaningless it may be; and so, Prufrock is compelled by human voices to wake up from his delightful dreams. His is the tragedy of one who is so swept away by the flow of events in time that he cannot find even a momentary stay against confusion, the tragedy of Everyman who is tormented by suffering in its most refined and horrible form - ennui.

The poems which follow "Prufrock" breathe the same foggy atmosphere of meaninglessness and futility; they depict in ironic and epigrammatic terseness the little anxieties, social embarrassments and unacknowledged vacuities of polite society in Boston and London. It is a world in which frustrated society ladies indulge in casual affairs and sigh over a life without meaning, in which corrupt financiers and degenerate nobility drive hard bargains, but the final reckoning reveals that they too have measured out their lives with coffee spoons. Cousin Nancy trying out "all the modern dances," (CN, p. 30) Burbank with his Baedeker and Bleistein with his cigar, Apeneck Sweeney laughingly indifferent to the song of the nightingales, Grishkin whose "friendly bust / Gives promise of pneumatic bliss" (WI, p. 52) - apparently, their social life is rich and satisfying; actually, it is meaningless and futile, full of boredom, like a peal of laughter trailing off into a wail, ending in a sob. The desolation and murkiness of the urban landscape, the viscosity of the past from which the present cannot escape, the juxtaposition of the commonplace and the horrible, the break-down in human relationships - all evoke a limbo world in which nothing of value can truly be done or experienced. The future does not exist, the past is irredeemable and the present is unbearable. So, one echoes Baudelaire: "What, in Heaven's name, has this world henceforth to do? . . . Progress has atrophied in us all that is spiritual . . . and there cannot be any progress (true progress, that is to say, moral progress) except within the individual himself."[8] Or, one contemplates the endlessly shifting scene with horror and despair and awaits death like Gerontion.

"Prufrock" exemplifies the tragi-comedy of a middle-aged man, "with a bald spot in his hair" and a romantic disposition, who retreats into his dream-world to escape the futility of his existence; his "mermaids" are the opium that relieves his ennui. "Gerontion," on the other hand, represents the tragedy of a thoroughly disillusioned old man, who has no faith to sustain him and who has nothing to look forward to except death. He sees too clearly to take refuge in dreams. Consequently, he has only the "thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season." (G, p. 39) He is an intellectual, with a keen sense of history and a knowledge of international affairs, who has moved freely in a cosmopolitan world of finance and corruption. He has eschewed that ultimate modern evil, war, and apparently led a rich and blameless life.

Still, he feels tormented by guilt, for in his pursuit of sensual and intellectual gratifications, he has forsaken the supernatural, personified in Christ the tiger. And, towards the end of his life, he discovers that the people and events he has courted all along are all fleeting, merely part of a gyrating, whirling flux of existence, incapable of affording him any permanent satisfaction and happiness:

Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind.

(G, p. 38)

He has not even the "ghosts" of his former life, memories, to live on. His youth is fled and his house decayed, so that he faces the void. He can find no intellectual solution to his predicament, since it is essentially one of spiritual distress. His life-long pursuit of truth as an intellectual abstraction has been in vain. His extensive knowledge of human events is of no avail, for history cannot furnish him with wisdom or perception of the ultimate truth:

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities.

(G, p. 38)

In short, he learns to his dismay that his rational and humanistic attitude towards life will not save him in the end. His is the tragic portion of a man who has found such a good servant in reason that he has become its enamoured slave. He suffers not from an undeveloped mind or heart, but from an undeveloped soul. Only a logic-transcending faith in a divinity that shapes our ends can liberate him from such suffering. And so, he perches outside his decayed house, contemplating the ruinous whirligig of life without and within, and waits for rain, the rain of divine grace to moisten his parched soul. But that kind of rain will come only after the emptiness of the Waste Land is behind the seeker and a full measure of suffering has scorched and purified his soul.

In the poems published before The Waste Land, then, suffering is identified with loneliness, frustration and impotence, and there is the heart-searing lament over the meaninglessness of life spent amidst the fog and smoke of winter afternoons. With the publication of The Waste Land (1922), the perception becomes deeper and wider so that suffering is seen to be universal, prevalent in the lives of ancients as well as moderns, among the heroes and saints of yore as well as among the typists and clerks of the modern world.

It is commonly held that Eliot criticizes our materialistic civilization and the loss of spiritual values in our time by evoking the squalor, the emptiness and meaninglessness of life in the modern world.[9] Eliot himself, however, has reacted sharply to this view that 'dates' his poems and confines his ideas to a particular epoch:

> I dislike the word generation. When I wrote a poem called The Waste Land some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed "the disillusionment of a generation," which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention.[10]

Eliot's irritation is quite natural, for such criticism ignores the fact that the true poet writes for all time, though he addresses himself to the deepest truths of his own time. The many languages, cultures and experiences which Eliot incorporates in his poems, especially The Waste Land, testify to the universality of his concerns. The ancient and the modern often reside cheek by jowl with each other and the language at times teases us out of all categories of time such as past, present and future into the region of the eternal. In short, his poetry dwells on man, his civilization and his destiny. Specifically, it deals with the perennial problem of human suffering and gropes for a positive way out of suffering to freedom.[11] In other words, Eliot is responding to the same fundamental intuition that moved Krishna or the Buddha (or, for that matter, Christ) and embodying his responses in poetry.

Seen in this light, The Waste Land becomes a poetic restatement of Eliot's speculation that "the deeper design" may be that "of human misery and bondage which is universal."[12]

The original epigraph to The Waste Land, which Eliot rejected on Pound's advice, was from Conrad's The Heart of Darkness:

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision - he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath - "The horror! The horror!"[13]

Kurtz is horrified because he lives his life all over again in his imagination. Death, when it finally arrives, is a relief for him. The horror stems, therefore, from living one's life all over again, of being enmeshed in continual suffering, in life without end.

The final epigraph comes from Petronius' Satyricon and speaks of the Cumaean Sibyl, most famous of prophetesses, whom Apollo granted a life of as many years as she had grains of dust in her hand. She forgot to ask, however, for eternal youth and so shrunk away to nothing. She hangs in a jar and when asked, "What do you want?" and replies, "I want to die." It is again the horror of the inability to die, and of endless suffering.

This universal and endless suffering is perceived by Tiresias who is the central uniting figure ~~in the~~ poem, according to Eliot:

> . . . although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', (Tiresias) is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phonecian sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.
>
> (WL, p. 218)

In other words, Tiresias is all the different characters in the poem; they are himself reincarnated again and again in endlessly different lives, which are yet one life, united in his consciousness which has been present throughout.[14]

Commenting on Eliot's note on Tiresias, Stephen Spender has remarked that it might induce the student of Eliot's poetry to conclude that "one-eyed merchant equals Phonecian sailor equals Ferdinand, Prince of Naples."[15] Precisely, this is Eliot's intention. He wants us to understand that suffering is universal and omnipresent in the phenomenal world and that it is endless; we have to repeat the cyclic process of birth, growth, decay and death again and again and again. Only, a Tiresias is aware of his previous lives; most of us are not, because we have not refined our consciousness to perceive them. The full horror of existence, the horror which Kurtz and the Sibyl dimly perceive, is mercifully concealed from the eyes of the majority of mankind, for mankind cannot bear very much reality.

The Waste Land, then, appears to be a collection of dramatic monologues uttered by different voices, ancient and modern; actually, the poem is Tiresias remembering his past lives, seeing them all unroll before his mind's eye.[16] It is significant that he is in much the same condition as Kurtz or the Sibyl, "throbbing between two lives." (WL, p. 68) Tiresias, in other words, is not impersonating these characters;

he is these characters; he is seeing himself enacting different roles at different times and enduring the same suffering:

> And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
> Enacted on the same divan or bed . . .
>
> (WL, p. 69)

The characters range from queens to washerwomen, from warriors to clerks and sinners to saints. The faces and lives may be different, but the underlying consciousness is the same. And sameness is bound to produce ennui, suffering in its most refined and horrible form.

The idea of reincarnation or metempsychosis is present in Vedanta as well as Buddhism. The individual consciousness evolves toward the freedom tout court of nirvana or total self-awareness through innumerable lives; in this evolution, the incarnations may be higher or lower in order. The idea is implicit in Christianity, which urges the individual to repent of his sins and to be reborn in divinis, as otherwise he will sink to perdition. Eliot reinforces the idea of reincarnation in The Waste Land by grafting on to it the myth of the Fisher-King. It concerns a land which has been laid waste by a curse and so produces neither vegetable nor animal life. The curse is removed when a knight appears in search of the Holy Grail and the land is resurrected. The resurrection of the waste land is also connected with primitive fertility cults, which

> conceived of the cycle of the seasons as the life of a god who controlled the energies of nature, and who nevertheless had to submit to the power of death. But the death of the god was not permanent, for it was followed by a resurrection . . . And since water was the basic necessity of these agricultural communities, the resurrection of the god coincided with the coming of the spring rains, the central symbol of the fertilizing process . . . But these early vegetation myths developed later into 'the mystery religions', which linked the ideas of death and resurrection in the natural

> world with that of a parallel process in the world of the spirit.[17]

Eliot is, in short, marrying myth and metaphor to emphasize the philosophical notion of metempsychosis.[18]

Eliot himself has acknowledged in his notes to The Waste Land that he owed his ideas of fertility rites and the resurrection of the waste land to J.G.Frazer's The Golden Bough and Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance. By his own admission, they provide a framework for The Waste Land:

> Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem was suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: From Ritual to Romance (Cambridge). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book elucidates the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean The Golden Bough; I have used especially the two volumes Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.[19]
>
> (WL, p. 76)

Interestingly enough, both Ms.Weston and Frazer hark back to the Orient to describe the origin of fertility rites and the Grail legend.

Ms.Weston, for instance, draws attention in her book to certain curious parallels between the Grail legend and the Rig Veda as well as the Mahabharata. In the Rig Veda, the god Indra releases the imprisoned waters just as Gawain and Perceival do in the Grail legend:

> . . . it is Indra to whom a disproportionate number of hymns of the Rig Veda are addressed, that it is from him the much desired boon of rain and abundant waters is besought, and that the feat which above all others redounded to his praise, and is ceaselessly glorified both by the god himself, and his grateful worshippers, is precisely the feat by which the Grail heroes, Gawain and Perceval, rejoiced the hearts of a suffer-

> ing folk, i.e., the restoration of the rivers to their channels, the 'Freeing of the Waters.' Tradition relates that the seven great rivers of India had been imprisoned by the evil giant, Vritra, or Ahi, whom Indra slew, thereby releasing the streams from their captivity.[20]

And in the *Mahabharata*, the story of Rishyaçringa bears a curious resemblance to that of Perceval in the Grail romances:

> . . . the lonely upbringing of the youth in a forest, far from the haunts of men, his absolute ignorance of the existence of human beings other than his parent and himself, present a close parallel to the accounts of Perceval's youth and woodland life, as related in the Grail romances. . . . The circumstances under which Rishyaçringa is lured from his Hermitage are curiously paralleled by the account, found in the *Queste* and Manessier, of Perceval's temptation by a fiend, in the form of a fair maiden, who comes to him by water in a vessel hung with black silk, and with great riches on board.[20]

Ms.Weston concludes that the specific task of the Grail hero was not just a literary invention but an inheritance of Aryan tradition; the Grail story was, moreover, rooted in ancient ritual, "having for its ultimate object, the initiation into the secret sources of Life, physical and spiritual."[21]

The central personality of the Grail story, the Fisher-King, whose infirmity entails misfortune on his land, is also linked with Indian tradition, according to Ms.Weston. She poses a significant question - why should he be called the *Fisher*-King? - and proceeds to answer it by an examination of the symbolism of the Fish. She is aware that those who hold the Grail story to be fundamentally Ghristian have associated the symbolism of the Fish with Christ and his disciples, whom he promised to make "Fishers of Men." She alleges, however, that Christianity "did no more than take over, and adapt to its own use, a symbolism already endowed with a deeply rooted prestige and importance."[22] She affirms with certainty that the Fish is "a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity" and goes back to the Hindu and Buddhist mythologies to prove her point:

> In Indian cosmogony Manu finds a little fish in the water in which he would wash his hands; it asks, and receives, his protection, asserting that when grown to full size it will save Manu from the universal deluge. This is Jhasa, the greatest of all fish.
>
> The first Avatar of Vishnu the Creator is a Fish. At the great feast in honour of this god, held on the twelfth day of the first month of the Indian year, Vishnu is represented under the form of a golden Fish . . . The Fish Avatar was afterwards transferred to Buddha.
>
> In Buddhist religion the symbols of the Fish and Fisher are freely employed. Thus in Buddhist monastries we find drums and gongs in the shape of a fish, but the true meaning of the symbol, while still regarded as sacred, has been lost, and like the explanation of the Grail romances, are often fantastic afterthoughts.
>
> In the Mahayana scriptures, the Buddha is referred to as the Fisherman who draws fish from the ocean of Samsara to the light of Salvation. There are figures and pictures which represent Buddha in the act of fishing, an attitude which, unless interpreted in a symbolic sense, would be utterly at variance with the tenets of the Buddhist religion.[23]

These close parallels between Oriental religions and Christianity are not accidental, according to Ms.Weston. They clearly indicate that Christianity was originally an Eastern religion and that it retained certain Oriental symbols and practices even after its adaptation to the needs of the Western world. She quotes from Father Cumont's Religions Orientales to support her argument:

> "Researches on the doctrines and practices common to Christianity and the Oriental Mysteries almost invariably go back, beyond the limits of the Roman Empire, to the Hellenized East. It is there we must seek the key of enigmas still unsolved. The essential fact to remember is that the Eastern religions had diffused, first anterior to, then parallel with, Christianity, doctrines which acquired with this latter a universal authority in the decline of the ancient world. The preaching of the Asiatic priests prepared in their own despite the triumph of the Church."[24]

The concepts and customs of the ancient world, in other words, have been reincarnated in a refined and modified form in Christianity -

metempsychosis in operation on a conceptual plane.

Frazer too turns to Oriental religions to explain the vegetation ceremonies. It is highly interesting to note, for instance, that he subtitles the two volumes of The Golden Bough which Eliot especially used as "Studies in the Histories of Oriental Religions"(emphasis mine). We know that Eliot devoted considerable time and effort to the study of Oriental languages and scriptures at Harvard. Could this have stimulated his interest in Frazer's application of anthropology to comparative religion?[25] In a recent exhaustive study called The Literary Impact of 'The Golden Bough', John B. Vickery suggests that this was, in fact, the case:

> . . . it is clear that Eliot possessed a well-developed and persistent interest in psychology and anthropology, particularly as they applied to comparative religion. Precisely when this interest was aroused is hard to say. It may have been during the years when Eliot was a Harvard undergraduate or a graduate studying philosophy and literature in Paris, that is, in the period from 1906 through 1911. . . . a more likely date for Eliot's initial acquaintance with Frazer and Frazer-influenced works is from late 1911 or early 1912 through 1915. For one thing, a number of important studies of myth and ritual receiving their orientation from The Golden Bough . . . did not appear until 1912 or later. Coupled with this is the fact that from 1911 to 1915 Eliot was reading Sanskrit and philosophy at Harvard and in Europe. Both the subjects and his instructors, especially James Woods, could easily have intensified his familiarity with the Cambridge school, The Golden Bough, and comparative religion generally.[26]

At any rate, Frazer traces the origin of fertility rites and vegetation ceremonies associated with the death and resurrection of Adonis, Attis and Osiris to ancient Indian rituals; he points out that some of these rituals are still extant today.[27] According to John B. Vickery, Eliot extends the association further to the death and resurrection of Christ:

> . . . the god's death is not, to the true believer, an irredeemable catastrophe and tragedy. As Frazer remarks in the

> chapter entitled "The Killing of the Tree Spirit," the death of the god is "merely a necessary step to his revival or resurrection in a better form. Far from being an extinction of the divine spirit, it is only the beginning of a purer and stronger manifestation of it." Historically, this is borne out by the first explicit appearance of Christ in "What the Thunder Said." After the Adonises, Attises and Osirises of the world he comes as the "stronger manifestation" of divinity, the Christian dying and reviving man-god.[28]

Christ, then, is an incarnation higher in the hierarchy to the other man-gods. The notion of a man-god regenerating the waste land may, therefore, be said to have evolved through Adonis, Attis and Osiris toward Christ - metempsychosis at work on a metaphysical plane.

It is interesting to note that the Sybil is also discussed by Frazer in his book. He finds a parallel to the Sybil legend in the folktale about a girl in London whose wish to live forever was granted. Eliot too connects the past with the present by showing that London contains its own contemporary Sybils. The Sybil lives on, reincarnated, so to speak, in the persons of the anonymous lady of "A Game of Chess," Lil, and the typist. Each in her turn is faced with an endless vista of misery, despair and boredom; each is a mute prophetess enacting the doom of the phenomenal world, a doom that is not physical death and dissolution but unending life and spiritual degradation.

The Sybil's concern with death is also elaborated in the opening section, "The Burial of the Dead," in terms of the life, death and resurrection of vegetation:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.
>
> (WL, p. 61)

The overwhelming feeling is one of dread mixed with watchful anticipation. Why is April, the beginning of Spring, called the "cruellest month"? John B. Vickery has a plausible answer:

> . . . to contemporary ears the attributing of cruelty to April is an arresting and somewhat puzzling idea. But stated most simply, the reason for describing April as the cruellest month is that it marks the point at which the vegetative and human cycles both intersect and contradict each other. Vegetation begins to bloom at the time of the crucifixion and death of Christ, the man-god. Inevitably in such a situation man's attitude is one of bewilderment and uncertainty, for he is compelled to face the complexities of his world. This feeling that April is a time of great crisis is also reflected in The Golden Bough's discussion of a number of April rituals designed to protect people from the evil and destruction of the world. Coupled with this is April's connection with the burial ceremonies. The reference to the office of "The Burial of the Dead" reminds us that the death of Christ occurred in the spring . . . In addition, festivals of mourning for the dead Adonis often took place in the spring. By these allusions implicit in April's cruelty, Eliot links Christ and Adonis to suggest that both their deaths were part of those ritual celebrations that protected man from the overwhelming power of evil. And since Adonis was a vegetative deity it is inevitable that his departure should be matched by a "dead land" filled only with "dull roots" and "dried tubers."[29]

April, then, seeks to awaken man and the world to her crucial nature and to the death and burial of the god. This is why lilacs bloom and are vivified by rain; the lilacs are "a symbol not only of the miracle of birth in a dead land but of memory," enabling us to recall "the dying and reviving god, Attis, whose return from the dead was foreshadowed in the appearance of lilac-coloured blossoms at the very beginning of spring." The lilacs appear, moreover, along with the rain; together, they symbolize "the revival and awakening of the human consciousness to its religious dimensions."[30] Myth and metaphor coalesce, therefore, in Eliot's poetic exploitation of the philosophical notion of metempsychosis and of the anthropological facts connected with the vegetation ceremonies.

Since metempsychosis involves endless reincarnations and these in turn result in ennui, ennui is the form in which suffering manifests itself among the inhabitants of the waste land. Ennui is the outcome of the feeling that there is nothing really new under the sun, that birth, growth, decay and death repeat themselves endlessly in the world and that history is a meaningless cyclic process. Consequently, apathy and boredom pervade the lives of the ancients as well as moderns in _The Waste Land_ and is mirrored in the physical condition of the land:

> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water.

(_WL_, p. 61)

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> . . .
> If there were water we should stop and drink
> Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
> Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
> If there were only water amongst the rock
> Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
> Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
> There is not even silence in the mountains
> But dry sterile thunder without rain
> There is not even solitude in the mountains
> But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
> From doors of mudcracked houses

(_WL_, p. 72)

The appalling vacuity of the inhabitants of this waste land is captured vividly in the words of the anonymous lady of "A Game of Chess":

> 'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> 'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
> 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> 'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'
> . . .
> 'What shall I do now? What shall I do?
> 'I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
> 'With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
> 'What shall we ever do?'

> The hot water at ten.
> And if it rains, a closed car at four,
> And we shall play a game of chess,
> Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.
>
> (WL, p. 65)

It is a condition of acute spiritual distress, terrifying in its meaninglessness.[31]

This sense of spiritual distress or Angst so prevalent in The Waste Land spills over into The Hollow Men. The haunting rhythm hammers home the despair over life's incertitude and unending pain and laments the absence of any life-renewing force. We are in the world of the hollow men, the stuffed men, for whom the shadow ever falls "Between the conception / And the creation," (HM, p.85) so that nothing ever happens and everything is in a state of limbo. We are in death's dream kingdom, a twilight world of inaction, in which there are only the debris of civilization and voices singing in the wind. Even the witness to this desolation is a pitiful scarecrow of a man, dressed in dead rats' coats and crow's skins to scare other rats and crows, caricaturing the emptiness in the lives of others like himself.

The desolation of this twilight world is underscored by the epigraphs. The first epigraph is from The Heart of Darkness - "Mistah Kurtz - he dead" (HM, p. 83) - a pronouncement that leaves Marlow unmoved in Conrad's tale, for the 'horror' Kurtz has perceived, his vision of endless suffering, lives on in Marlow's memory. In fact, Kurtz's final words - "The horror! The horror!" - haunt Marlow and ring persistently in his ears, even during his brief visit, a year later, to Kurtz's Intended, who continues to mourn his death. The second epigraph - "A Penny for the Old Guy" (HM, p. 83) - is even more significant. It recalls to our mind that well-known Jacobean gentleman who decided to make history by blowing up the House of Commons but failed because he had leaked his plan to a few friends; he was caught and executed, so that what should have ended with a big "bang" merely ended in a "whimper." Since then, his death is celebrated in a yearly ritual. The anarchist, in other words, has displaced the man-gods in the popular imagination: Adonis, Attis, Osiris and Christ have been supplanted by the Old Guy. Consequently, the world of the hollow men is a waste land in which there is not even a glimmer of the hope of redemption:

> This is the dead land
> This is cactus land
> Here the stone images
> Are raised, here they receive
> The supplication of a dead man's hand
> Under the twinkle of a fading star.
>
> (HM, p. 84)

So, the hollow men go round and round the prickly pear, unable to undo their own past and be freed of their karma (the cumulative effect of their past deeds). They can only live their lives over and over again and endlessly endure the impermanence and suffering of the phenomenal world.

Ash Wednesday marks a turning point in Eliot's poetic vision. No longer does it survey a barren waste land; now, for the first time, there is water in the wilderness and anxiety is balanced by hope. The perception of transience and agony is offset by an awareness of the possibility of rising to a higher sphere of being. This awareness will swell in the Four Quartets into a positive and joyful affirmation of the still point of the turning world. This does not mean, however, that the fundamental intuition of impermanence and suffering loses its force amidst the hope and joy of the later poems. On the contrary, hope and joy can both be found and lost and peace is never held so securely that there is never any fear of losing it. The greater the bliss the greater the agony of being found unworthy of it.

Thus, the speaker in Ash Wednesday is acutely conscious of "the infirm glory of the positive hour" and of the limitations of the phenomenal world:

> Because I know that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is actual only for one time
> And only for one place
> I rejoice that things are as they are . . .

(AW, p. 89)

He has only a faint hope of liberation to sustain him in his long purgatorial climb from the depths of agony to the heights of ecstasy. And his yearning to be free of incertitude and suffering and to find peace that passes understanding bursts out irrepressibly:

> Where shall the word be found, where will the word
> Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence
> Not on the sea or on the islands, not
> On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,
> For those who walk in darkness
> Both in the day time and in the night time
> The right time and the right place are not here . . .

(AW, p. 96)

Consequently, he implores "the veiled sister" (the Holy Virgin or Dante's Beatrice reincarnated?) in tearful accents to intercede for him and pray for all

> Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee,
> Those who are torn on the horn between season and season,
> time and time, between
> Hour and Hour, word and word, power and power, those who wait
> In darkness . . .

> . . . those who offend her
> And are terrified and cannot surrender
> And affirm the world and deny between the rocks
> In the last desert between the last blue rocks
> . . .

(*AW*, p. 96-97)

We are back again in the waste land, and the desert air resounds to cries of self-doubt, agony and despair. But the darkness is not all-pervasive; "the veiled sister" *can* be seen and furnishes a gleam of hope.

The light brightens and grows to a blaze in the *Four Quartets*; and paradoxically, the darkness seems more intense. Thus, the notion of transience, or of impermanence of the phenomenal world, is given profound poetical expression in the opening lines of "East Coker":

> In my beginning is my end. In succession
> Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
> Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
> Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
> Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
> Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
> Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
> Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf,
> Houses live and die . . . [32]

(EC, p. 177)

This ever-changing façade of the phenomenal world is visualized as the tossing sea in "The Dry Salvages" and depicted in all its immeasurable flux of terror and despair. The central metaphor of the second movement of "The Dry Salvages" is that of men adrift in the sea, desperately toiling to keep chaos at bay and to find a momentary stay against confusion in the ceaseless flux:

> Where is the end of them, the fishermen sailing
> Into the wind's tail, where the fog cowers?
> . . .
> We have to think of them as forever bailing,
> Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers
> Over shallow banks unchanging and erosionless
> Or drawing their money, drying sails at dockage;

Not as making a trip that will be unpayable
For a haul that will not bear examination.

(DS, p. 196)

Change, then, is constant; it is manifested in endless cycles of birth, growth, decay and death in the objective world of phenomena; it is also extended to the knowing subject in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages," so that no individuality or ego can be preserved from the flux:

When the train starts, and the passengers are settled
To fruit, periodicals and business letters
(And those who saw them off have left the platform)
Their faces relax from grief into relief,
To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours,
Fare forward, travellers! not escaping from the past
Into different lives, or into any future;
You are not the same people who left that station
Or who will arrive at any terminus,
While the narrowing rails slide together behind you;
. . .
Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;
You are not those who saw the harbour
Receding, or those who will disembark.

(DS, p. 187-188)

This frightening underworld of the London subway has already been evoked in "Burnt Norton," where men and women are seen to be in limbo, neither dead nor alive, whirled about by circumstance like bits of paper in the wind. They are, in fact, inhabitants of death's twilight kingdom, latter-day incarnations of the hollow men, whose souls have shrunk in spirit and reveal only straw or emptiness:

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
. . . Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning

Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time . . .

(BN, p. 173-174)

Despite the overtones of irony and pathos, the basic existential fact of impermanence comes across to us strongly.

The complementary notion of universal suffering is even more pronounced than the notion of flux. Perhaps, nowhere else in Eliot's poetry is the universality of suffering more poignantly evoked than in the second movement of "The Dry Salvages":

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing,
The silent withering of autumn flowers
Dropping their petals and remaining motionless;
Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage,
The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayable
Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?
. . .
There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,
No end to the withering of withered flowers,
To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,
To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,
The bone's prayer to Death its God.

(DS, p. 186)

This apprehension of existence as it is in the phenomenal world is not the outcome of deliberate rationalization. It is rather a tragic vision of life, grasped in all its immediacy of horror and despair, as Kurtz did in his dying moment or as Tiresias does in his remembrances of things past. It is even doubtful whether the impermanence and suffering are ever fully grasped, for mankind cannot bear too much reality.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

[1] Cf. Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S.Eliot* (Oslo: I Kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1949), p. 166:

> Just as Eliot's interest in Western philosophy can still clearly be traced in his poetry, so his study of Oriental philosophies and religions have left indelible marks. It is not always easy to distinguish these marks from those left by Christian mysticism, and one risks attaching too much importance to concrete references such as the quotation from *The Bhagavad Gita* in "The Dry Salvages." There are obvious points of contact between Eastern and Western thought. The two currents meet in the New Testament, while in the Old Testament, which has become a part of the basis of Western culture, we really meet a tributary of the Oriental tradition. Thus, *Ecclesiastes*, which Eliot draws upon constantly, presents a view of life related to that of Buddhism. If, however, the distinctions of Eastern and Western mysticism are not always easy to draw, Eliot's allusions show at least that he has often had the Oriental mystics in mind . . . These allusions call our attention to a far profounder saturation of Eliot's poetry with Hindu and Buddhist thought than they immediately indicate.

[2] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 49.

[3] From the Anguttara-nikaya iii, 134, in H.C.Warren's *Buddhism in Translations* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1963), p. 12.

[4] Greatly simplified, the Vedantic and Buddhist argument runs thus: All things eventually pass away. On account of our fragility, we are susceptible to disease and death. Our hopes, our wishes, our desires, our ambitions, our personalities - all of them will be forgotten as if they had never existed. This is a universal phenomenon. Nothing abides for ever, everything changes and perishes. If we crave what changes and perishes, therefore, our desires are never satisfied and we are full of suffering. It is the impermanence of the object of our craving that causes disappointment and sorrow. Hence, suffering and impermanence are virtually one and the same.

[5] T.S.Eliot, "Dante," *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958), p. 275.

[6] The idea that the phenomenal world is in a constant state of flux is present in Heraclitus. But, Heraclitus does not specifically associate flux or impermanence with suffering. Also, as Elizabeth Drew has pointed out in her book, *T.S.Eliot: The Design of His Poetry* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 148, Heraclitus has no concept of a "still point" where there is "neither arrest nor movement" (BN, p. 173). The notion of a resting place amidst the flux, a still centre around which the world turns, is not present in Heraclitus.

[7] E.M.Forster, "T.S.Eliot," Abinger Harvest (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 112.

[8] Charles Baudelaire, "Fusees," Journaux intimes, Oeuvres completes (Pleiade, 1961), p. 1263.

[9] Even Eliot's admirers disagree over the qualities for which the poem should be admired. Edmund Wilson speaks of it, in Axel's Castle (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), pp. 105-114, as "simply one triumph after another," but understands it essentially as a statement of despair and disillusionment. Helen Gardner maintains that it is actually "an Inferno which looked towards Purgatario" and perhaps a Paradiso, in her book, The Art of T.S.Eliot (N.Y.: E.P.Dutton and Co., 1959), p. 98. Critical of both these views, I.A.Richards argues that The Waste Land is a poem effecting "a complete severance between . . . poetry and all beliefs," in "The Poetry of T.S.Eliot," Principles of Literary Criticism (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1934), pp. 290-292. Neither Cleanth Brooks nor Norman Nicholson has interpreted The Waste Land satisfactorily. They interpret it as a poem of Christian faith rather than of intense suffering and hope, which are universal.

[10] Cf. Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot, pp. 234-237:

> In the summer of 1921, Eliot saw Le Sacre du Printemps in London . . . Its music, he told the Dial, metamorphosed the 'rhythm of the steppes' into the scream of the motor horn, the rattle of machinery, the grind of wheels, the beating of iron and steel, the roar of the underground railway and the other barbaric cries of modern life. It brought home the continuity of the human predicament: primitive man on the dolorous steppes, modern man in the city with its 'despairing noises;' the mind of the one a continuation of the mind of the other, the essential problem unchanging. Eliot's interpretation of Stravinsky suggests that a theme of The Waste Land is *the unchanging predicament of man, and the unchanging remedy* . . .
>
> (emphasis mine)

[11] T.S.Eliot, "Thoughts After Lambeth," Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958), p. 368.

[12] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 5

[13] T.S.Eliot, The Waste Land, a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts including the annotations of Ezra Pound, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1971), p. 3.

[14] Tiresias is a celebrated seer of ancient Greek mythology. His name means that he is 'a seeker of signs.' He comes across coupling

snakes, strikes them with his staff and is transformed into a woman for seven years. At the end of this period, he again encounters the two snakes coupling, strikes them and regains his male form. The other signal event in his life is the loss of his eyesight as a punishment for seeing Pallas Athene bathing in the nude. As a consequence of his peccadilloes, Tiresias is a blind hermaphrodite, gifted with foreknowledge. The Hindu figure Ardhanarisvara is probably the best known of the Eastern hermaphroditic deities: a fused embodiment of the male and female principles of the universe, of Siva and his Sakti.

[15] Stephen Spender, "T.S.Eliot," Encounter (March 1965).

[16] Critics like Grover Smith and D.W.Harding do acknowledge the fact that Tiresias "sees the substance of the poem." But they are at a loss to explain how Tiresias can see both ancient and modern lives at once, or how the past and present can co-exist in his consciousness in such rich detail. And how can he possibly sense the trials and tribulations of a wide range of characters, so different from each other in terms of historical setting, social status and culture? If, on the other hand, we discard or underplay Tiresias' role in the poem, as Ian Hamilton and Graham Martin are inclined to do, the poem falls apart, losing all coherence and unity. It is only when we perceive that Tiresias is reliving his past lives in "every detail of desire, temptation and surrender" (like Kurtz) that we recognize the crucial role he plays in the poem. His consciousness is all-inclusive precisely because he has gained a measure of self-confidence through suffering in several lives.

[17] Elizabeth Drew, T.S.Eliot: The Design of His Poetry (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 85-86.

[18] Joyce uses metempsychosis as a motif in Ulysses, a work which Eliot admired and wished to emulate. Indeed, metempsychosis seems to be at the bottom of Eliot's constant view of human beings metamorphosed in the most curious ways:

> And I must borrow every changing shape
> To find expression . . . dance, dance
> Like a dancing bear,
> Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
>
> (PL, p. 21)

Prufrock imagines himself to be a crab, Tiresias assumes a number of different identities, and the Hollow Men are reduced to being scarecrows.

[19] Jessie L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance (N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 26.

[20] Ibid., p. 32.

[21] Ibid., p. 203.

[22] Ibid., p. 125.

[23] Ibid., p. 126.

[24] Ibid., p. 150.

[25] See John B. Vickery, The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 236-261.

[26] Ibid., p. 261. See also Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance, p. 204.

[27] Ibid., p. 261.

[28] Ibid., p. 261.

[29] Ibid., p. 248.

[30] Ibid., p. 248.

[31] Others beside Eliot were conscious of ennui and the acute suffering it entails. For instance, Paul Valéry makes his Socrates allude to "that evil amongst all evils, that poison of poisons, that venom inimical to all nature" in L' Ame et la danse. See Paul Valéry, Dialogues, tr. by William McCausland Stewart (N.Y.: Pantheon Books Inc., 1956), p. 51.

CHAPTER 5

THE WHEEL

> "This vast universe is a wheel. Upon it are all creatures that are subject to birth, death and rebirth. Round and round it turns and never stops. It is the wheel of Brahman. As long as the individual self thinks it is separate from Brahman, it revolves upon the wheel in bondage to the laws of birth, death and rebirth. But when through the grace of Brahman it realizes its identity with him, it revolves upon the wheel no longer. It achieves immortality."
>
> - Svetasvatara Upanishad

The human predicament in the midst of this omnipresent and universal change and suffering is often expressed in Vedanta and Buddhism by the image of the wheel. Krishna speaks of the terrible wheel of birth and death which binds the individual down to the phenomenal world of time and circumstance:

> The spirit of man when in nature feels the ever-changing conditions of nature. When he binds himself to things ever-changing, a good or evil fate whirls him round through life-in-death.[1]

And the Buddha alludes to the wheel of existence, which he calls samsara:

> The Wheel of Existence is without known beginning . . .
> The Wheel of Existence is empty with a twelvefold emptiness.
> Respecting the Wheel of Existence it is to be understood that the two factors ignorance and desire are its roots.
> Ignorance, desire and attachment form the round of the corruptions . . .
> And it is through these three that this Wheel of Existence is said to have three rounds . . . it is incessant . . . it revolves.[2]

The symbolism of the wheel is not alien to Christian thought. In fact, as the Plotinian scholar, W.R.Inge, - with whose writings Eliot was probably familiar - points out, the early Christian era is marked by the feeling that the chief aim of mankind should be "to escape from the 'weary wheel' of earthly existence and to find rest in the bosom of the eternal."[3] The image of the wheel is to be found in the New Testament: the phrase in the Epistle of James (iii: 6), "setteth on fire the course of nature," is a free translation of the Greek verse meaning wheel. The Oxford Annotated Edition of The Holy Bible explicates it as "the wheel of birth."[4]

Many expounders of Plato's doctrine of time have found the wheel or the circle an appropriate symbol of the relation between time (an attribute of God) and eternity, so that the circumference of the wheel may be said to represent the world of created things in time and the centre of the wheel the timeless realm of God.[5] The image of the wheel also serves as the best illustration of Plotinus' picture of the universe. The relation between the three parts of Plotinus' Trinity, the One, the Spirit and the Soul, can be described as the relation between two concentric circles and their common centre, the centre being the One, the inner circle the Spirit, and the outer circle the Soul. In the last analysis, the symbol of the wheel may be said to split up the world order into two essentially different factors: rotary movement and immobility - or the circumference of the wheel and its still centre, an image of the Aristotelean 'unmoved mover'. This becomes an obsessive theme in mythic thinking, and persists into the Middle Ages, so that even the ornamental oculi of Romanesque churches and the rose-windows of Gothic cathedrals are patterned after the wheel. And in the Renaissance, the wheel is absorbed into a popular adage - God is a Circle, whose circumference is nowhere and whose centre is everywhere.[6]

The image of the wheel occurs in Shakespeare's King Lear. Towards the end, Lear, a greatly saddened and wiser man, declares to Cordelia:

> Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire.[7]

Similar metaphors, derived probably from Neo-Platonic sources, abound in Metaphysical Poetry. Donne, for instance, uses the image of the circle and the unmoving centre in "The Second Anniversarie":

> Then, Soule, to thy first pitch worke up againe;
> Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
> For once that they the Center touch, doe touch
> Twice the circumference; and be thou such;
> Double on heaven thy thoughts on earth emploid;
> All will not serve; only who have enjoy'd
> The sight of God, in fulnesse, can thinke it;
> For it is both the object, and the wit.[8]

The wheel may even be regarded as an archetypal symbol expressing a fundamental fact of human existence, as T.E.Hulme observes in his Speculations:

> It is the closing of all roads, this realisation of the tragic significance of life, which makes it legitimate to call all other attitudes shallow. Such a realisation has formed the basis of all great religions, and is most conveniently remembered by the symbol of the wheel. This symbol of the futility of existence is absolutely lost to the modern world, nor can it be recovered without great difficulty.[9]

It may, however, be poignantly evoked in poetry by a sensitive and discriminating use of language.

The symbolism of the wheel is not explicitly present in the poems published before The Waste Land. However, it is implicit in the tone and manner of certain vivid passages that linger in the memory long after the poems have been laid aside. Prufrock's existence, for instance, is enveloped, literally and metaphorically, in an ever-swirling fog:

> The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes
> The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
> Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
> Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains . . .
> Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.
> (LP, p. 13)

The sameness he encounters everywhere in his harsh urban existence produces in him an extreme weariness of spirit; his life seems to revolve around the taking of toast and tea, and of women who "come and go / Talking of Michaelangelo." (LP, p. 14)

The speaker in "Preludes" is almost an extension of the Prufrockian personality. He is obsessed by the desolation of the urban landscape and the sordid lives of its inhabitants convulse him with pity, so that he yearns for a redeeming compassionate figure:

> I am moved by fancies that are curled
> Around these images, and cling;
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
> Infinitely suffering thing.
>
> (P, p. 23)

A Buddha or a Christ, however, is nowhere in evidence; so he cannot but take refuge in cynicism:

> Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
> The worlds revolve like ancient women
> Gathering fuel in vacant lots.
>
> (P, p. 23)

It is the defiant gesture of a person who is compelled to bear witness to a spectacle of suffering unrelieved by any hope of redemption, of one who is appalled by the cyclic purposelessness of day-to-day existence in which none is better off or more necessary than ancient women gathering fuel in vacant lots. Despite the mocking tone, the pained awareness of suffering as an inescapable fact of existence peeps through. And the recurrent pattern of suffering and despair is represented by a striking archetypal image - an image strongly suggestive of a revolving wheel.

Gerontion is an old man, with "thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season." (G, p. 39) Yet, he is acutely conscious of the vacuity of his existence and suffers intensely because of it. The flurry of foreign names he recalls from his former life - Mr.Silvero, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, Fraülein von Kulp, De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs.Cammel - evokes a cosmopolitan world of finance and corruption. But all these people are merely part of a gyrating, whirling humanity, ultimately producing only emptiness:

> Vacant shuttles
> Weave the wind.
>
> (G, p. 38)

In the final analysis, all these people have no reality, "whirled / Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear / In fractured atoms." (G, p. 39) They are no more important than a dead gull in the windy straits of Belle Isle or Cape Horn, or an old man driven by the trade winds to a sleepy corner. Their fate epitomizes the general disintegration of life and suggests a universal human predicament. Gerontion is aware of this. Though he never actually uses the image of the wheel, his yearning to escape from "the weary wheel of earthly existence" and to find "rest in the bosom of the eternal"[10] certainly comes across to us through his meditations.

By the time he came to write The Waste Land, Eliot had apparently thoroughly digested the Hindu-Buddhist ideas he became acquainted with at Harvard, and assimilated those ideas in his poetry. According to Herbert Howarth, he

> preached the Buddhist askesis in The Waste Land. He preached a new askesis, the Buddhist renunciation in Christian guise, in his essays on education in the late twenties and thirties, urged it by the example of Becket and the examples of Agatha and Harry, urged in 'Little Gidding' the cultivation of 'detachment of self from things and persons', and in The Cocktail Party again described the saint's renunciation of the world.[11]

We know, moreover, that he seriously contemplated becoming a Buddhist when he wrote *The Waste Land*, and that he incorporated the Buddha's Fire Sermon as well as the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad in the poem.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the image of wheel figures prominently in *The Waste Land*. For instance, the cyclical process of birth, copulation and death is reinforced in the opening section by Madame Sosostris, who describes people literally going round in circles:

> I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
>
> (*WL*, p. 62)

Significantly, in the first as well as the final drafts of "The Burial of the Dead," Madame Sosostris picks out a Tarot card containing the image of "the Wheel" (note the capitalization of the word). (*WL*, p.62) It is clear that Eliot is evoking the image of the wheel, explicitly as well as implicitly, in order to convey the hopeless predicament of "the crowds of people," doomed to repeat their lives endlessly:

> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
> Flowed up the hill and down King William street,
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
>
> (*WL*, p. 62)

It is a meaningless existence, bound forever by time and circumstance, like that of the Cumaean Sibyl, and the horror stems from the fact that most of these people are not even fully conscious of the utter vacuity of their lives.

It is noteworthy that the description of the lives of the London crowds is again touched upon in the first draft of "The Fire Sermon":

> London, the swarming life you kill and breed,
> Huddled between the concrete and the sky;

> Responsive to the momentary need,
> Vibrates unconscious to its formal destiny . . . [12]

These lines are crossed out in the manuscript by Ezra Pound, who edited the poem, and the margin carries his terse comment: B—ll—s. Justified, perhaps, from an aesthetic point of view, for the poetry loses its intensity from too much elaboration. The last line, however, is singled out by Eliot, who makes a faint pencil mark - Keep - beside it in the margin. But he omits the line in his final draft. Nor does he retain the crucial line which follows immediately and explains what the "formal destiny" of London's "swarming life" is:

> London, your people is bound upon the wheel.[13]

The assertion is repeated two lines later and reappears in a slightly modified form elsewhere in the manuscript:

> The inhabitants of Hampstead are bound forever on the wheel.[14]

Following Pound's advice, and guided by his own discretion, Eliot does not include these lines in his final version. But it is clear that he draws heavily on the symbolism of the wheel in his pathetic evocation of the death-in-life of the London crowds.

Could not Eliot have thought of the medieval wheel of fate when he included the wheel in Madame Sosostris' pack of cards? In fact, Philip Wheelwright has identified the wheel of "Burnt Norton" as the Wheel of Fortune,[15] a very common significance of the wheel in Shakespeare and other Renaissance authors. Such an identification is possible in the case of *The Waste Land* too. But, such an identification pays too much attention to the popular, iconographic aspects of the symbol, neglecting its primary philosophical meaning, a meaning closely related to ancient theories of time, Greek and Indian. Philosophically speaking, the wheel of birth and death (*samsara*) in Hindu-Buddhist thought is more universal and includes the symbolism of the medieval wheel of fate, which represents the fluctuations in the fortunes of an individual, the fall from a high to a low state and the rise from a low to a high state. For, it is possible, according to the Hindu-Buddhist notion of metempsychosis, to be incarnated in a lower as well as higher order of existence.[16] There is a rather striking example of this 'fall' from a higher to a lower incarnation in the change of Philomela into a nightingale, which Eliot adapts from Ovid's Metamorphoses:

> The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
> So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
> Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
> And still she cried, and still the world pursues . . .
>
> (emphasis mine) (WL, p. 64)

The abrupt change from the past to the continuous present tense in the last line indicates that this is an ongoing process: loss of innocence and purity entails reincarnation in a lower order of existence, which may be symbolically represented by a lower curve of the revolving wheel.

In fact, this continuous process of metempsychosis and the associated symbolism of the wheel are frequently illustrated in "A Game of Chess."[17] There is, at first, the decline of royalty: Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, magnificently described through blank verse in the opening lines fades into the anonymous typist, awaiting the young man carbunculur in her room. (The 'fall' is reflected even in the deterioration of the blank verse into jiggling rhymes). The splendour of the Egyptian Queen is subtly undermined by the inconsequential chatter of her modern prototype - "O O O O that Shakespherian Rag" (WL, p. 65) and "the burnished throne" of the former yields place to "a closed car at four." (WL, p. 64-65) Vitality and purposefulness, in other words, have been sapped, leaving apathy and aimlessness to reign in their place.

The series of "Goonights" (WL, p. 66) at the end of "A Game of Chess" is a poignant yet vulgarized echo of another Danish girl - Ophelia - who was ill-treated by a Prince. The echo preserves the Shakespearian backdrop of the entire scenario in "A Game of Chess"; at the same time, it is Shakespeare reincarnated and modernized, at the lower turn of the wheel.

Further evidence for Eliot's use of metempsychosis and the symbolism of the wheel comes from the manuscript of The Waste Land. Even before he chooses Ovid's Philomela, he toys with the idea of lower incarnations in a general and unspecified manner. Thus, the probable future condition of the inhabitants of Hampstead is darkly hinted at:

> Dog's eyes reaching over the table
> Are in their heads when they stare
> Supposing that they have the heads of birds
> Beaks and no words . . .
> I should like to be in a crowd of beaks without words . . . [18]

It is illuminating to compare the idea expressed here obliquely with the Lama's exposition of metempsychosis in Kim - a book which deeply impressed the young Eliot:

> When the shadows shortened and the lama leaned more heavily upon Kim, there was always the Wheel of Life to draw forth . . . Here sat the Gods on high - and they were the dreams of dreams. Here was our Heaven and the world of the demi-Gods - horsemen fighting among the hills. Here were the agonies done upon beasts, souls ascending or descending the ladder . . . Often the Lama made living pictures the matter of his text, bidding Kim . . . note how the flesh takes a thousand shapes, desirable or detestable as men reckon, but in truth of no account either way; and how the stupid spirit is bound to follow the body through all the Heavens and all the Hells, and strictly round again.[19]

This is, in fact, the main thrust of The Waste Land. The blind Tiresias sees all the different lives of his past unroll before his vision; he bears witness to the flesh "taking a thousand thousand shapes" in lower as well as higher incarnations.[20] He is not impersonating them; he contains them all in his comprehensive gnostic vision; he is all these different beings:

> And I Tiresias have foresuffered all .
> Enacted on the same divan or bed . . .
>
> (WL, p. 69)

The human incarnations range over a wide social spectrum, including queens as well as washerwomen, heroes and saints of yore as well as charlatans and sinners of today - they are all manifestations of the flesh "taking a thousand thousand shapes," according to the law of karma (the volitional acts of an individual which determine the nature of his subsequent lives). It is theoretically possible, therefore, for the poem to include many more lives, other than those already present. Bleistein and Fresca, for instance, could well have figured in the final version of the poem. Bleistein's avarice rules his actions and these constitute his karma, determining the nature of his succeeding existence. Consequently, his next life will resemble his present one, an idea that finds metaphorical expression:

> Though he suffers a sea change
> Still expensive and strange.[21]

As for Fresca, her present life is the fruit of her past karma; the circumstances surrounding her life might have changed but her nature remains essentially the same. Hence, Fresca

> . . . in another time and place had been . . .
> The lazy laughing Jenny of the Bard.[22]

The faces may be different, but the karma does not change; and so, the wheel turns a full circle, throwing up similar lives again and again:

(The same eternal and consuming itch
Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
. . .
For varying forms, one definition's right:
Unreal emotions, and real appetite.[23]

Why did Pound strike off the lines describing these characters, reinforcing the theme of reincarnation or metempsychosis? His objections were probably aesthetic rather than philosophical. It is obvious that the poetry would have suffered from the inclusion of too many examples illustrating the same concept. Moreover, a little ambiguity adds richness and intensity to the poetry. This is equally true of the long sea voyage Pound deleted, for essentially it conveys the same idea of reincarnation. The voyage represents in a modern guise the journey of Ulysses in Canto XXVI of the Inferno and includes an anachronistic encounter with the sirens:

On watch, I thought I saw in the fore cross-trees
Three women leaning forward, with white hair
Streaming behind, who sang above the wind
A song that charmed my senses . . . [24]

The speaker fancies that it is a dream, but actually it is his remembrance of things past, the memory of a former life.

Incidentally, this explains why Stetson is hailed as a former acquaintance in the opening section - "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!" (WL, p. 62) The speaker means exactly what he says: Stetson too is a reincarnation; he has been associated with the visionary narrator Tiresias in a former birth. The quick recognition indicates that Tiresias has grown in self-awareness through his innumerable lives and the ready acceptance of the former life and its association suggests the maturing of his wisdom.

Similarly, the Dog at the end of the opening section is the Websterian Wolf reincarnated, but - and this is interesting - changed in character. The Wolf in The White Devil was a "foe" to be feared, but the Dog in The Waste Land is a "friend to men." (WL, p. 63) It digs up the buried corpse of the corn god of the vegetation myths and prevents the corpse from sprouting and flowering, thereby ending resurrection. Reincarnation, not death, in other words, is to be feared and avoided, since it binds one forever to the wheel. The earlier offer to show "fear in a handful of dust" (WL, p. 61) refers not to death but to the dubious immortality of the Sibyl who was granted "a life of as many years as she had grains of dust in her hand."[25]

Thus, when "you come to brass tacks" (FA, p. 122) like Sweeney, existence is a nightmare, an endless cycle of birth, copulation and death. To be helplessly bound to the time-conditioned wheel of samsara, to be blindly caught up in its revolutions, without realizing its evanescent nature, is avidya or ignorance; not to seek a way out of this endless cycle is to be involved in perpetual suffering:

> I think we are in rat's alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones.
> . . .
> A rat crept softly through the vegetation
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
> While I was fishing in the dull canal
> On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
> Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
> And on the king my father's death before him.
>
> (WL, p. 65-67)

An air of unreality pervades, then, the lives of the inhabitants of London or Hampstead. And because the turns of the wheel are universally applicable, what is true of London is true of other cities also:

> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal
>
> (WL, p. 73)

The Jewish, Greek and Egyptian civilizations have all declined and are now no more; the civilizations of the modern world will follow in their wake. And we, who inhabit the cities, the centres of modern civilization, are all ghosts of our former lives, enacting essentially the same roles again and again. The wheel keeps turning:

> The nymphs are departed.
> Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
> . . . The nymphs are departed.
> And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
> Departed, have left no addresses . . .
> But at my back in a cold blast I hear
> The rattle of bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

(WL, p. 67)

The bones are alive, chuckling, for death does not mean the end of suffering; the wheel will turn, and we will be reborn. Reincarnation, not death, is to be dreaded.

Death brings no relief, then, from the turns of the wheel, for it is but a prelude to another life; in fact, the moment of death causes intense agony, for, like Kurtz or Phlebas the Phonecian, one has to live one's life all over again, without any real hope of a magical sea-change into something rich and strange:

> A current under the sea
> Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
> He passed the stages of his age and youth
> Entering the whirlpool.

(emphasis mine) (WL, p. 71)

The inexorable revolutions of the wheel claim one at death and lead to rebirth. The point is made even more clearly in the French account of Phlebas the Phonecian in "Dans le Restaurant": "Le repassant aux étapes de sa vie antérieure." (DL, p. 51) Eliot is here recalling Baudelaire's "La Vie Antérieure," of which Wallace Stevens writes:

> The idea of an earlier life is like the idea of a later life,
> or like the idea of a different life, part of the classic
> repertory of poetic subjects.[26]

Obviously, Eliot uses this "classic repertory" with such controlled skill that it no longer belongs to the realm of the ordinary and the commonplace.

An intriguing example of his use of this "classic repertory" may be found in the invitation to "Come in under the shadow of this red rock" (WL, p. 61) in the opening section of The Waste Land. The passage originally belongs to a fragment called "The Death of St.Narcissus." It begins as a narcissistic account of a man who is struck "mad by the knowledge of his own beauty," but becomes an exposition of metempsychosis in a later version. Consider, for instance, the following lines:

> First he wished that he had been a tree
> To push its branches among each other. (emphasis mine)[27]

The stress here is on egotistic self-indulgence in fantasy. The emphasis shifts in the later version to the remembrance of a former mode of existence:

> First he was sure that he had been a tree . . . (emphasis mine)[28]

Similarly, the lines -

> Then he wished that he had been a fish
> With slippery white belly held between his own fingers
> To have writhed in his own clutch . . . (emphasis mine)[29]

are subtly modified into -

> Then he knew that he had been a fish . . . . (emphasis mine)[30]

And, last but not the least, the man's desire to change his sex and get raped -

> Then he wished he had been a young girl
> Caught in the woods by a drunken old man

> To have known at the last moment, the full
> taste of her own whiteness . . . (emphasis mine)[31]

becomes a fait accompli in the final version:

> Then he had been a young girl . . . (emphasis mine)

Why does Eliot deliberately carry out these changes? Probably because he wants to describe a series of previous incarnations or "vie antérieures" and reinforces the theme of reincarnation.

It is also interesting to note that the higher form of existence supersedes the lower in this series of incarnations. Out of insentient matter - the tangled roots and branches - is forged a living tree; the tree gives place to the fish, a mobile creature, endowed with instincts, and the fish gives place to a girl, a thinking and feeling human being. It is evolution in miniature - from matter to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, from animal to man. And what is the next link in this great Chain of Being? God surely. This is the answer Eliot posits in his later poetry, though he prefers to use an impersonal philosophical language to indicate this ultimate link in the Chain of Being. He calls it the still point of the turning world - the centre, so to speak, of the revolving wheel.

Taken in isolation, however, without the counterbalancing notion of the still centre, the symbolism of the wheel and its associated concepts of change and suffering constitute a vision of despair, a vision presented with such skill and penetration that even the most enterprising reader of this poetry might draw back in dismay, overwhelmed by its unrelieved bleakness. For, given the fundamental intuition of universal change and suffering, there seems to be no escape from the terrible wheel of birth and death; it stops not for the widow's tear or the orphan's cry, but grinds on, crushing everything in its path. Fortunately, however, this profound despair is offset by an equally profound hope of freedom from bondage to the wheel and of peace that passes understanding. Even in the Waste Land, there is the promise of rain.

The symbolism of the wheel and its associated concept of metempsychosis are also present in the final section, "What the Thunder Said," but blended with the Christian idea of resurrection and eternal life as well as the vegetation myth of the corn god who dies yearly and is resurrected. Thus, the section begins with an allusion to the arrest, suffering and death of Christ:

> After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
> After the frosty silence in the gardens
> After the agony in stony places
> The shouting and the crying
> Prison and place and reverberation . . .

(WL, p. 72)

Then comes a description of the "thunder of spring over distant mountains," with its promise of rain that will resurrect the buried vegetation god and make the crops grow; and concludes with a collection of fragments that, as we shall see later, reinforce the theme of reincarnation and suggest the possibility of release from the endless cycle of birth and death.

Eliot's treatment of the Christian resurrection is rather unorthodox and even pessimistic. The Gospels leave us in no doubt as to the identity of the figure that accompanies the apostles on the road to Emmaus - it is the risen Christ, triumphant over death and promising eternal life. The figure in Eliot's poem is more ambiguous and provokes doubtful enquiries:

> Who is the third who always walks beside you
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road

> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> - But who is that on the other side of you?

It is not even certain whether the figure is a man or a woman. Eliot himself suggests, moreover, in his notes that the apparition is a simple hallucination. He says that the lines were stimulated by an Antartic expedition, in which "the party of explorers . . . had the constant delusion that there was one more member than could actually be counted." (WL, p. 79) Apparently, therefore, Eliot subsumes the risen Christ to the Hindu-Buddhist ideas of reincarnation and the illusory nature (maya) of existence. Is Eliot playing the doubting Thomas? This seems to be the case, especially when we consider the account of Chapel Perilous a few lines later: the Chapel is empty, except for a crowing cock - a reminder of Peter's doubt and denial.

Lacking the assurance of a Saviour, the visionary narrator, Tiresias, remains bound to the wheel and his soul is imprisoned in the flesh yet again:

> I have heard the key
> Turn in the door once and turn once only
> We think of the key, each in his prison
> Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
>
> (WL, p. 74)

But his situation is not entirely hopeless. He does have some knowledge of the nature of existence and some awareness of the agony resulting from the endless cycle of births and deaths. This enables him to sympathize (dayadhvam) with his fellow-beings and to control (damyata) his own destiny to some extent:

> Only at nightfall, aetherial rumors
> Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
>
> (WL, p. 74)

Cities and their inhabitants may fall again and yet again in the inevitable cycle, but at least the narrator has grown enough in self-awareness to "set his lands in order." (WL, p. 74)

The cyclic quality of the wheel of birth and death blends easily with the vegetation myth, in which the corn god is repeatedly buried and revived. All life constantly renews itself as the wheel keeps turning; this is why the poem encompasses a full year's cycle, from spring to winter, in the opening section. Moreover, the symbolism of the wheel explains the complex image of joyless spring at the beginning of the poem. April is "the cruellest month" (WL, p. 61) precisely because it mixes the "memory" of former existences in the vanished cities of the world with the "desire" for the evanescent things of the world, and causes the wheel to revolve, entangling mankind in the web of maya and reincarnation: or, as the Gita puts it,

> Their soul is warped with selfish desires, and their heaven in a selfish desire. They have prayers for pleasures and power, the reward of which is earthly rebirth.[34]

Spring, then, only renews the old agonies. This is why, in "The Fire Sermon," the narrator dwells on the horror, not of death, as the allusion to Marvell might lead us to expect, but of seasonal regeneration through the union of Sweeney and Mrs.Porter in the Spring. (WL, p. 67)

Towards the end, Tiresias, seeker of reality, who contains the Fisher King and the questing knight within himself, sets his "lands in order" and shores up certain "fragments" against the ruins of former lives. (WL, p. 74-75) These fragments reinforce the idea of reincarnation: the first translates as "Then he dived back into the fire that refines them," (WL, p. 75) and conveys the notion of purification through purgation - an exact parallel to the idea of evolution toward nirvana through metempsychosis (the individual soul refines itself through successive lives till the still point is attained); the second recalls the reincarnation of Philomela as a nightingale, a continuous process in the universe, wherever acts of violation and loss of innocence are involved; the third equates the disinheritance and the consequent sense of loss in a former life to Tiresias' present yearning to possess the peace that passes understanding permanently; the fourth alludes to Hieronymo, who feigns madness and stages a play, in which the actors speak "in unknown languages" and enact different roles that reflect their real lives, but which is intended to prove "the invention and all was good"[35] - the wheel of birth and death involves us in many different lives and causes pain and suffering, but impels us in the end to seek and attain nirvana. The poem concludes, therefore, by reiterating the instructions received from the thunder - Give, Sympathize, and Control - and intoning the formal invocation of the Upanishads - Shanti Shanti Shanti - a fitting reminder that in the ultimate analysis the peace that passes understanding will prevail; the revolutions of the wheel will eventually be annulled by its central peace, the turning world will be overcome by the still point.

Unlike The Waste Land, The Hollow Men does not have multiple facets of meaning; it is much more simply conceived and constructed. The Waste Land projects universal change and suffering through a montage of individual lives bound on the wheel of birth and death, so that the cumulative impression is that of mankind in retreat from reality, or the still point of the turning world. We are confronted, in other words, with a terrifying "heap of broken images," terrifying not merely because the images are broken, but because the images are so many.

Precisely the same spiritual Angst is implied through The Hollow Men; but, it is only implied, not illustrated in minute detail; consequently the poem is a lyrical and symbolic comment on the spiritual distress occasioned by bondage to the turning wheel. Thus, the predicament of the hollow men is that of the waste landers; they lack the 'courage to be' and they have lost their reality because they have never affirmed it. Their malaise is not that they have any evil impulses, but that they have no impulses whatsoever. Hence they are remembered

> not as lost
> Violent souls, but only
> As the hollow men
> The stuffed men.
>
> (HM, p. 83)

Their lives are full of vacuity, not because life as a whole is meaningless and futile, but because they evade responsibility for their acts and refuse to acknowledge that life has a purpose beyond survival and reproduction. Their bondage to the cycle of birth and death is vividly captured in their dance around the prickly pear:

> Here we go round the prickly pear
> Prickly pear prickly pear
> Here we go round the prickly pear
> At five o' clock in the morning.
>
> (HM, p. 85)

The sing-song effect of the modified nursery rhyme ironically underscores the pathos and emptiness of the lives of the hollow men. They decline to assert their freedom by any spiritual and moral choice; they choose rather to act arbitrarily, gratifying their most immediate needs, quite unmindful of any transcending ideal. In short, they are blindly caught up in the revolutions of the wheel, oblivious to the still point.

But there are a few sensitive souls who decline to be enslaved by the turns of the wheel and who consciously turn toward the still point. Ash Wednesday records the penitential experience of such a soul. The theme of turning is frequently repeated in the poem, and seems related to the beginning of the Epistle on Ash Wednesday:

> Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.[36]

On this text, there is a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes which begins with an allusion to the image of the turning wheel:

> Now at this time is the turning of the year . . . Everything now turning that we also would make it our time to turn to God in . . . Upon this turning, cardo vertitur, the hinge turns, of our well and evil doing for ever . . . Repentance itself is nothing but a kind of circling . . . Which circle consists of two turnings . . . First a turn wherein we look forward to God and with our whole heart resolve to turn to Him. Then a turn again wherein we look backward to our sins wherein we have turned from God . . . The wheel turns apace, and if we turn not the rather these turnings may overtake us.[37]

It is a well-known fact that Eliot admired Lancelot Andrewes, wrote a long essay on him and even incorporated his sayings in his poetry and drama. Most probably, therefore, he was influenced by this sermon in his exploration of the implications of the turning wheel in Ash Wednesday. This does not mean, however, that the Hindu-Buddhist concept of the wheel has been discarded, for we have already seen that Eliot does evoke the teachings of the Buddha and Krishna in the poem. It only means that he is trying to blend Christian and Hindu-Buddhist concepts in the poem, an experiment he will attempt on a deeper level in Four Quartets.

Ash Wednesday, as a whole, suggests a change of direction in the life of the speaker, away from the turning world toward the still point. It also conveys something of the inconstancy of the human will, which is apt to turn back to the temptations from which it has turned away. Thus, a sense of insecurity as well as an impression of the conscious effort required in turning toward the still point pervade the poem. They serve to indicate that the faith toward which the poem reaches should not induce complacency and that submission to the divine will does not mean inertia.

The protagonist has not attained spiritual enlightenment by the end of the poem; he has merely had tantalizing glimpses of the peace that comes through self-surrender to the divine will. Hence, his prayer for detachment from the evanescent things of this world and for compassion toward all suffering beings:

> Teach us to care and not to care
> Teach us to sit still.
>
> (AW, p. 98)

He is now in a position to perceive that his struggle to turn away from the tempatations of the world toward the reality of the still point is part of the travail of the whole of creation; it is a universal human predicament to be torn between the whirligig of the world and the peace that passes understanding. He can also sense that the movement of the world seems contrary to the stillness of the divine Word that spells this peace. Hence, the world does not recognize the Word when it appears in the guise of a Krishna, a Buddha or a Christ; instead it rebels against the Word and even kills it when it is incarnate in the flesh:

> Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word.
>
> (AW, p. 96)

By its rejection of the Word, the world enchains itself ever more firmly to the gyrations of the wheel and is involved in continual change and suffering. Yet, paradoxically, the existence of the Word is central to all existence and activity in the world. This concept is brought home most precisely by the image of the world turning about its still centre and this in turn evokes the wheel revolving about its central axis.

The basic vision of the human condition projected in the Four Quartets is less perplexed, though no less complex, than that in The Waste Land. Both stress the universality of change and suffering and communicate the spiritual Angst that ensues from bondage to the wheel. But what is only the faintest glimmer of hope of relief in The Waste Land - "a damp gust bringing rain" (WL, p. 74) has grown into a positive blaze of faith in the Four Quartets. Even the conflict between the temporal and eternal values, which figures so prominently in Ash Wednesday, has lost its intensity due to a sharper apprehension of that greater pattern in which all contraries are transcended. Within this pattern all the discordant symptoms of the malaise of the Waste-Landers - the quest for certainty and freedom, the need to love and be loved, the longing for grace - assume a heightened significance; they are all now seen as temporal manifestations of the confrontation between man and God.

In order to portray the confrontation in all its varied and complex aspects, Eliot has recourse to the symbolism of the wheel once again. He never actually uses the term 'wheel' as he does in the manuscripts of The Waste Land. Instead, he evokes the wheel by a skilful use of words and situations, so that the image is completed in our mind. That he is able to evoke the image so vividly is a measure of his poetic genius.

The movement of the world against the Word has already been described in a striking and unforgettable manner in Ash Wednesday. The second movement of "Burnt Norton" begins by alluding to the temptations of the turning world which cloud human perception and hinder the apprehension of the still centre:

> Garlic and sapphires in the mud
> Clot the bedded axle-tree.
>
> (BN, p. 172)

According to Grover Smith, garlic and sapphires stand for gluttony and avarice, while mud suggests filth and the weakness of the flesh.[38] Together these imperfections prevent the wheel from turning freely. The "bedded axle-tree" probably corresponds to the image of 'the still centre,' which is introduced a few lines later, and represents the point of contact between man and God, around which all activities, human and non-human, are centred. When this central axle is clogged up by the impurities of the flesh, the movement of the wheel, man's active life in the world, is impeded and appears to be meaningless and futile. Nevertheless, it is still possible for man to overcome his limitations and apprehend a divine order in which the impediment is nullified, and a greater pattern in which the apparently contradictory forces of his being are reconciled. In other words, it is still possible for man to intuit

> the still point of the turning world.
>
> (BN, p. 173)

It is a cryptic yet precise description and vividly brings to mind the image of the wheel turning about its central axis.[39] The image has multiple connotations: it highlights the apparent opposition between the unmoved Mover and the cyclical activity of His creation, between the qualities of eternity and time; and simultaneously it illustrates the intimate relationship between God and the world, the eternal and the temporal.

When man succeeds in overcoming the limitations of the flesh and gaining even a momentary apprehension of the still centre, from that moment onwards he has an intuitive revelation of

> both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood
> In the completion of its partial ecstasy
> The resolution of its partial horror.
>
> (BN, p. 173)

The moment of ecstasy does not belie the agony that comes before and after it; it merely invests man with a fresh insight into the change and suffering that pervade the world. In other words, the apprehension of the still point enables him to understand the merry-go-round of life in the world in the light of eternity; he learns to live in harmony with the noumenal reality, so that the flux and suffering of the phenomenal world no longer have the power to cause him spiritual anguish. And the wheel turns smoothly about its central axle, its movement no longer impeded by human imperfections. Such a harmonious life is charmingly depicted in "East Coker" through the dignified dancing of the country people around a bonfire:

> Round and round the bonfire
> Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
> Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
> Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes
> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> Mirth of those long since under earth
> Nourishing the corn.
>
> (EC, p. 178)

It is a scene of rustic simplicity and wholesomeness, very different from the dismaying spectacle of the Waste-Landers going round and round in circles or of the Hollow Men enacting a horrible caricature of a dance round and round the prickly pear. Not only does this 'daunsinge' signify 'matrimonie'; it also tells of the concord of men and women who, ordering their lives in obedience to the natural rhythms,

> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest,

(EC, p. 178)

find themselves in harmony with the whole universe. Their lives are even associated with those of the "beasts":

> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling,
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

(EC, p. 178)

A summing up, which is far removed in tone from Sweeney's cynical assessment of life in "Fragment of an Agon":

> That's all the facts when you come to the brass tacks:
> Birth, and copulation, and death.

(FA, p. 122)

The cycle of birth, reproduction and death remains the same for the men and women dancing round the bonfire, but it assumes a greater significance, because it is seen to contribute to a harmonious whole.

Nowhere does Eliot completely elucidate the concept of the wheel and its relation to the still point, but we have seen that he makes significant use of the concept. By piecing together his overt and covert allusions to the wheel, however, we may understand its significance. The wheel keeps turning, symbolizing the ceaseless flux of existence. The various forms of life in the world, vegetable, animal and human, are whirled about by the wheel, finding themselves at a higher or lower curve of the wheel, according to their individual karma, in their successive lives; consequently, they are all bound to the wheel and are subject to endless suffering. It is possible, however, for a sensitive human being to be free of this bondage and to live harmoniously by apprehending the still centre of the wheel and understanding the turning world in terms of the still point, so that the apparent contradictions between them are resolved in the light of eternity. The moment of apprehension comes not by human will but by divine grace; yet one has to be ready for it, repenting of past errors and preparing oneself through "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action." (DS, p. 190)

It is this kind of preparation we see enacted through the character of Thomas Becket in Murder in the Cathedral. Becket is the contemplative par excellence; that he has meditated long and deep over man's responsibilities to God and his fellow-beings is evident in all his words and deeds. He is fully aware that change and suffering are inseparable from existence and that the phenomenal world seems to be in opposition to the reality of the noumenon. But he also perceives that the noumenon is central to all activity in the phenomenal world: it is around the still point that the world keeps turning. Under the aspect of eternity, therefore, the phenomenal world and the noumenon, the turning world and the still point are not at odds with each other.

The image of the wheel is first evoked by the Third Priest, when he learns of the dubious peace surrounding Becket's return from exile:

> For good or ill, let the wheel turn.
> The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.
> For ill or good, let the wheel turn.
>
> (MC, p. 243)

Lacking an intuitive apprehension of the still point, the Third Priest can only perceive the procession of events in time; nor can he see whether Becket's return bodes good or evil. He is conscious only of the turning world; hence its real significance escapes him.

Far different is the perception of Thomas Becket; he has an intuitive grasp, if not the full realization of the greater pattern implied by the still point. He is also conscious of the peace and harmony that attends a life lived under the aspect of eternity. Hence, the very first word he utters is "Peace." (MC, p. 245) Then, he gently rebukes the Second Priest for railing against the superstitious fears of the women of Canterbury; they may be simple and ignorant, but Thomas is aware that they too have a part to play in the eternal design:

> They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer,
> They know and do not know, that action is suffering
> And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all must consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it,
> That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
> And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
> Be forever still.
>
> (MC, p.245)

Thomas' perception is almost awesome in its breadth and clarity. Life consists in action and to act is to be involved in suffering - or as Krishna or the Buddha put it, suffering is the fruit of karma, the cumulative effect of past actions. Acting and suffering, suffering and acting, therefore, all life turns on the wheel, and apparently this temporal existence is meaningless and futile. But, action and suffering do have a significance from an eternal perspective, for they impel all life toward the still centre of the wheel. Moreover, the turning world has no reality apart from the still point; hence, under the aspect of eternity, there is neither suffering nor action.

Thomas might almost be paraphrasing the philosophical concept cryptically expressed by Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita:

> If any man thinks he slays, and if another thinks he is slain, neither knows the ways of truth. The Eternal in man cannot kill: the Eternal in man cannot die. (2: 19)
>
> Not by refraining from action does man attain freedom from action. Not by mere renunciation does he attain supreme perfection. (3: 4)
>
> Whatever you do, or eat, or give, or offer in adoration, let it be an offering to me; and whatever you suffer, suffer for me. (9: 27)

A concept which was first embodied in American poetry by a forerunner of Eliot - Emerson - in "Brahma":

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
   Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
   I keep, and pass, and turn again.[40]

Thomas alludes to the wheel again, when his First Tempter tries to beguile him away from his duties and responsibilities by recalling to his memory the pleasant carefree times of his youth. Thomas firmly refuses to return to his former way of life, for

                                        Only
The fool, fixed in his folly, may think
He can turn the wheel on which he turns.

(MC, p. 247)

Thomas is no fool; he knows his past life cannot be revived - he cannot turn back the wheel on which he is bound. He prefers instead to free himself of his bondage by striving toward the central axis of the wheel.

But his progress toward the centre is not without hazard. The Fourth Tempter tempts him with his own intimate desire for martyrdom and the glory of the saints, and troubles him with his own doubts regarding the eternal design:

You have also thought, sometimes at your prayers
Sometimes hesitating at the angles of stairs,
And between sleep and waking, early in the morning,

When the bird cries, have thought of further scorning.
That nothing lasts, but the wheel turns . . .

(MC, p. 254)

The implication is clear: everything is ephemeral, in a state of flux, and hence, existence is a meaningless pattern of action and suffering - a proposition Thomas has rejected in his very first speech. The Fourth Tempter does not give Thomas any time to collect his thoughts; he proceeds, with great irony, to repeat Thomas' earlier speech word for word, so that Thomas has his own sage reflections on the wheel and its eternal significance flung in his teeth. Presumably, he learns a valuable lesson: reality can only be realized in action, it can never be conveniently encapsulated in words or thoughts. When he resists the temptation to do "the right deed for the wrong reason" (MC, p. 258) and resolves to act in a spirit of self-surrender, his course is clear:

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.
Now my good angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points.

(MC, p. 259)

He is well on his way to the still centre of the wheel and its peace that passes understanding.

Harry, in The Family Reunion, knows as well as Thomas that only the fool thinks that "He can turn the wheel on which he turns." (MC, p. 247) He confesses to Agatha and others his one-time folly of trying to turn the wheel back and seek even a brief respite from suffering:

One thinks to escape
By violence, but one is still alone
In an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts.
It was only reversing the senseless direction
For a momentary rest on the burning wheel
That cloudless night in the mid-Atlantic
When I pushed her over.

(FR, p. 294)

But he has now recognized his sickness; he holds at least "a fragment of the explanation" (FR, p. 296) and this, in turn, as Agatha assures him, will eventually deepen his understanding and show "the way to freedom." (FR, p. 296)

Harry's other aunts and uncles, even his mother, are inhabitants of the Waste Land, but they are all mostly unaware of their spiritual condition. Harry's mother, Amy, for instance, sighs for the return of spring and youth at the opening of the play; little does she know that "April is the cruellest month," (WL, p. 61) marking yet another beginning of the endless cycle of birth and death; nor does she pause to think, in her folly, that she cannot turn back the wheel on which she turns. Ivy, one of Harry's aunts, insists that if she were Amy, she "would go south in the winter," (FR, p. 285) unconsciously echoing the speaker in the opening section of The Waste Land. As for the others, - Charles, with his country squire's tastes, Gerald, in his pukka sahib's role, and Violet, with her grande dame attitudes - one and all, they qualify for admission to the Waste Land.

When Harry appears in their midst after several years' absence, they are all struck by his obvious distress over his own spiritual condition; and when he opens his mouth, he does not talk 'their language.' (FR, p. 324) These factors arouse a vague disquiet in their minds, so that when he leaves them for a while to take his bath, they have a sudden flash of insight into the general human predicament and speak in chorus:

> We all of us make the pretension
> To be the uncommon exception
> To the universal bondage . . .
>
> (FR, p. 301)

Briefly they experience the "horror" Kurtz perceived but their moment of awareness is short-lived and they end by insisting that the world is what they have always taken it to be - a safe and familiar place to drag out their apathetic lives in. Harry instinctively senses their spiritual bankruptcy soon after he arrives and identifies them accurately as

> people
> To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual impact
> Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep
> Never woken to the nightmare.
>
> (FR, p. 293)

In fact, their condition is akin to that of the hollow men going round and round the prickly pear in the cactus land; theirs is the tragic portion of death-in-life. But he also knows that their life would be unendurable if they were "wide awake;" (FR, p. 293) for, mankind cannot bear very much reality.

Unlike his mother, Harry does not yearn for spring; on the contrary, he dislikes it. In his conversation with Mary, the friend of his childhood, he speaks of spring as "an evil time, that excites with lying voices" and goes on to identify it with the resurrection of the dead:

> Spring is an issue of blood
> A season of sacrifice
> And the wail of the new full tide
> Returning the ghosts of the dead
> Those whom the winter drowned
> Do not the ghosts of the drowned
> Return to land in the spring?
> Do the dead want to return? (FR, p. 310)

Mary completes his thought:

> I believe the season of birth
> Is the season of sacrifice
> For the tree and the beast, and the fish
> Thrashing itself upstream:
> And what of the terrified spirit
> Compelled to be reborn . . . (FR, p. 310)

The implication is clear: spring is "an evil time," precisely because it portends reincarnation, which, in turn, means continuous bondage to the turning wheel. Both Harry and Mary recognize this, because both, in their own ways, long to be free.

Later on in the play, Harry appeals to Agatha for help to find a way out of his predicament, because he has always imagined her to be strong and free. But he discovers that she is actually a fellow-traveller on the path to freedom:

> I have thought of you as the completely strong,
> The liberated from the human wheel.
> So I looked to you for help. Now I think it is
> A common pursuit of liberation.
>
> (FR, p. 331)

So he tries to explore the past in her company and gain a clearer insight into reality. He finds his awareness widening, so that he is able to recapture in poetic language the momentary release he once obtained from the universal bondage to the wheel:

> In and out, in an endless drift
> Of shrieking forms in a circular desert
> Weaving with contagion of putrescent embraces
> On dissolving bone. In and out, the movement
> Until the chain broke, and I was left
> Under the single eye above the desert.
>
> (FR, p. 335)

Agatha, who too is acutely conscious of her enchainment to the wheel, confirms Harry's intuition: each of them is a prisoner of the turning world "until the chain breaks." (FR, p. 335) And Harry gives vent to his feelings of frustration and despair over still being enchained to the revolving wheel, leading an unredeemed life full of change and suffering:

> To and fro, dragging my feet
> Among inner shadows in the smoky wilderness,
> Trying to avoid the clasping branches
> And the giant lizard. To and fro.

Until the chain breaks.
The chain breaks,
The wheel stops . . .

(FR, p. 335)

It is a climactic moment of revelation in Harry's life. Now, he clearly understands 'the greater pattern' of existence: only when the 'still centre' is clearly perceived and firmly grasped, does "the chain" break and "the wheel" stop, freeing man from all the phantasmagoria of the turning world. Immediately after Harry's moment of revelation, the Furies, who have been pursuing him, appear before him. He is no longer afraid of them; he is prepared to follow them, for he knows now that ultimately he will be cleansed of his imperfections and be led to the still point.

Toward the end of The Family Reunion, when Harry has departed to follow the Eumenides, all the members of his family except Agatha and Mary are left in a sad state of bewilderment. Agatha and Mary, however, set up "a birthday cake with lighted candles" and "walk slowly in single file round and round the table, clockwise; at each revolution, they blow out a few candles, so that their last words are spoken in the dark." (FR, p. 349) It is a touching scene, reminiscent of the dignified and harmonious dance of the country people in "East Coker." The birthday cake might be said to symbolize the rebirth of the spirit to the divine order. Appropriately enough, Agatha's closing words are both a prayer and a benediction:

This way the pilgrimage
Of expiation
Round and round the circle
Completing the charm
So the knot be unknotted
The crossed be uncrossed . . .

(FR, p. 350)

The darkness in which these words are spoken is not the darkness of ignorance; it stands rather for the knowledge of reality, of which Vaughan spoke of as the "dazzling darkness" of God.[41] It is a divine darkness that comes only when all actions are performed in a spirit of self-surrender, extinguishing all present and future incarnations, like the candles on the birth-day cake.

Harry's consciousness of bondage to a "burning wheel" and a "human wheel" has been likened to that of Lear when he declares to Cordelia:

> Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am boung
> Upon a wheel of fire.[42]

No doubt, Eliot remembered these words, especially since he wrote an introduction to Wilson Knight's The Wheel of Fire. The image of the wheel occurs, moreover, in Dante and St.Augustine:

> To the high fantasy here power failed; but already my desire and will were rolled - even as the wheel that moveth quickly - by the Love that moves the sun and the stars.[43]

> My will the enemy held, and thence had made a chain for me, and bound me. For a forward will was a lust made; and a lust served, became custom; and custom not resisted, became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I called a chain) a hard bondage held me enthralled.[44]

However, the symbolism of the wheel in its most universal aspect is found more often in the Hindu-Buddhist writings. And the Lama in Kim speaks of the wheel and its significance. Not surprisingly, therefore, the interior landscape of both Agatha and Harry betrays Oriental overtones. Agatha speaks of moments of suffering which burn an individual "across a whole Thibet of broken stones," (FR, p. 332) while Harry refers to

> the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,
> A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar . . .
>
> (FR, p. 339)

And both of them allude to the freedom of the still point in similar terms:

> Until the chain broke . . .
> Until the chain breaks . . .
> Until the chain breaks.
>   The chain breaks.
> The wheel stops.
>
> (FR, p. 335)

Where do we find the closest parallel to these words and images? Not in Dante, St.Augustine or Shakespeare, not even in an Upanishad or the *Gita* but in *The Light of Asia*, which Eliot read as a boy and never forgot. There the Buddha speaks of release from change and suffering in a comprehensive manner:

> If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,
> And no way of breaking from the chain,
> The heart of boundless being is a curse,
> The soul of things, fell pain.
> . . . Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels
> . . . you that live and die.
> and whirl upon the wheel.[45]

No doubt, the mature Eliot vividly recalled what he had read as a boy and literally echoed Arnold's phrases in *The Family Reunion*.

This does not necessarily mean that Dante, St.Augustine and Shakespeare are nowhere in the picture, not to speak of the Hindu-Buddhist scriptures. Eliot probably amalgamated the ideas he had gleaned from reading these Western authors and Eastern texts with the strong impressions of his youth. After all, such an East-West ideo-synthesis was not alien to his temperament; had he not already practised it dramatically by collocating the Buddha and St.Augustine together at the very core of *The Waste Land*?

The image of the wheel does not occur in *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman*. But the associated symbolism does manifest itself in the lives of the characters in these plays. Edward and Lavinia, Peter and Celia, in The Cocktail Party, Sir Claude and Colby in The Confidential Clerk, Lord Claverton, Charles and Monica in The Elder Statesman, are all very much embroiled in their own little affairs at the start, so that they may well be thought of as being enchained to the turning wheel. By the end of the plays, however, they have all matured, gained their measure of wisdom. The progress of Celia and Lord Claverton toward the still point is particularly rapid: Celia becomes a missionary and dies a martyr like Thomas Becket, while Lord Claverton gives up all pretense, dies to his old self and is consequently "brushed by the wing of happiness." (ES, p. 581)

Even in his most 'Christian' writing, the modern 'Mystery' play, The Rock, Eliot evokes the wheel at the very beginning:

> O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
> O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
> O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
> The endless cycle of idea and action,
> Endless invention, endless experiment,
> Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
> Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
> Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
>
> (CR, p. 147)

The concept of impermanence and suffering, the ceaseless flux of existence, the endless cycle of birth and death, the turning world and the still point - they are all clearly and succinctly expressed. It is the nearest Eliot ever comes to a complete elucidation of the symbolism of the wheel.

"The deeper design," then, as Eliot writes elsewhere,[46] is that of human misery and bondage which is universal," though the individual can liberate himself from the wheel of samsara and attain the peace of the still centre.

But the question comes: what is it that prevents the individual bound on the turning wheel of the phenomenal world from an immediate perception of the still point? The answer lies in that mysterious phenomenon known as _maya_, which it is now time to explore through Eliot's poetry.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

[1] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 101.

[2] H.C.Warren, Buddhism in Translations (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 175-179.

[3] W.R.Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926), p. 8.

[4] *The Holy Bible*, ed. by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1469.

[5] According to the Neo-Platonist, Hans Leisegang, the symbol of the wheel is implicit in *Timaeus*. See Hans Leisegang, *Die Begriffe der Zeit und Ewigkeit in späteren Platonismus* (Münster i W., 1913), p. 4.

[6] See J.E.Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 371.

[7] *King Lear*, Act IV, sc. vii, ll. 46-48.

[8] *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. by H.Grierson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), p. 239.

[9] T.E.Hulme, *Speculations: Essays in Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936), p. 34.

[10] W.R.Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought*, p. 8.

[11] Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S.Eliot*, pp. 204-205.

[12] T.S.Eliot, *The Waste Land*, a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1971), p. 31.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[15] Philip Wheelwright has identified the wheel of "Burnt Norton" as the Wheel of Fortune, a very common significance of the wheel in Shakespeare and other Renaissance authors. Such an identification is possible in the case of *The Waste Land* too. But, such an identification pays too much attention to the popular, iconographic aspects of the symbol, neglecting its primary philosophical meaning, a meaning closely related to ancient theories of time, Greek and Indian.

[16] The idea is that every living creature undergoes a number of deaths and rebirths until it attains perfection. And, when a human

being has liberated himself, not only from all earthly desires, but also from the delusion that the world of senses has any real existence, then his true Self (Atman) finds its identity with the Absolute (Brahman). This is the final aim of all meditation, the end of Yoga. For those who do not attain the ultimate goal, there is no escape from the cycle of perpetual rebirths, nor is there any hope for them to be born into a world that has made some positive progress since they were lost born. They are, in fact, bound to the Wheel of Existence or samsara; propelled along the circumference of the wheel, they are unaware of the timeless centre, God.

[17] Eliot seems to use the notion of metempsychosis literally and metaphorically. In the final published version of The Waste Land, the symbolic significance of the 'fall' from a higher to a lower incarnation and the 'rise' from a lower to a 'higher' incarnation seems predominant. However, from the manuscripts of The Waste Land, it is quite clear that Eliot was well aware of the literal and religious implications of metempsychosis. It would seem, therefore, that we are meant to read and understand The Waste Land, literally and metaphorically at once.

[18] T.S.Eliot, The Waste Land, a facsimile and transcript, p. 105.

[19] Rudyard Kipling, Kim (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 346.

[20] Critics of Eliot seem to fall chiefly into two camps, one taking his note on Tiresias seriously and the other discarding it as unimportant. Grover Smith best exemplifies the former camp, while Hugh Kenner and Ian Hamilton exemplify the latter. Grover Smith accepts as axiomatic that within the maze of Tiresias' consciousness alone can the various characters commingle. But he is well aware that in the world of past actions Tiresias and the characters are distinct from each other and that "there must be a difference between the perceiver and the perceived, imposed by time if nothing else." (See Grover Smith's T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 68) In other words, Tiresias is the spectator, and the other characters are the actors on the stage of his consciousness. Now, the question comes: how can Tiresias possibly know all these personae and their actions, separated as they are by time and distance, in such intimate detail? Grover Smith and his followers glide over this difficulty and busy themselves with the unearthing of the sources of Eliot's numerous quotations in the poem. Hugh Kenner and his followers prefer to ignore Eliot's note altogether and quite arbitrarily assume that there is no single protagonist or point of view in the poem. They run the risk, therefore, of explicating a poem which does not internally cohere, a poem which disintegrates into several smaller poems and a meaningless jumble of quotations. Also, they are at a loss to explain why Eliot includes so many characters and episodes illustrating the same pattern of sensual craving, gratification and suffering.

No doubt, Tiresias is the spectator. But the characters are not totally distinct from his personality. He has been all those characters and enacted their different lives, at one stage or another, in his long journey toward nirvana, or the peace that passes understanding. With his refined consciousness, he can now *contain* them all in his gnostic vision and grasp how his own deeds in the past have determined the nature of his subsequent lives and actions. (In fact, his understanding is very similar to that of Arjuna in the *Gita*, who realizes that his own past deeds have brought him to the battle-field.) In other words, all the characters in the poem are stages in his quest towards Reality; this is why he knows them and their actions so intimately. In Hindu-Buddhist terms, his own *karma* has ruled over all the different incarnations of Tiresias. This is why there are so many different characters and episodes illustrating the same pattern of impulse, action and suffering. And, theoretically it is possible for Tiresias' consciousness to include many more characters. The manuscripts of *The Waste Land* do indicate that he toyed with the idea of including many other 'incarnations', but refrained from doing so because of Pound's disapproval. *The Waste Land*, in fact, is a marvellously open-ended poem, capable of infinitely expanding the consciousness of its readers, and making them aware of existential realities outside and beyond the poem. Matthiessen quotes from one of Eliot's unpublished lectures a comment on the necessity of writing poetry "without a shadow of a lie":

> This speaks to me of that at which I have long aimed, in writing poetry; to write poetry which should be essentially poetry, with nothing unpoetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones, or poetry so transparent that we should not see the poetry, but that which we are meant to see through the poetry, poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem points at, and not on the poetry, this seems to be the thing to try for. To get beyond poetry, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get beyond music. We never succeed, perhaps . . .

See F.O.Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S.Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry*, 3rd ed. (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 90.

[21] *The Waste Land*, a facsimile and transcript, p. 121.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[23] Ibid., p. 41.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[25] T.S.Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 60.

[26] Wallace Stevens, "Two or Three Ideas," *Opus Posthumous* (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 203.

[27] *The Waste Land*, a facsimile and transcript, p. 92.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 97.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 93.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 97.

[33] The seventeenth century in English Literature, Eliot's chief source of literary inspiration next to Dante, is characterized by an acute awareness of the transience of life and the tyranny of time. The medieval figures of Time and Death make their reappearance in art and literature at the end of the Renaissance, and Time has been called "the uncanny goddess of the Baroque." Time as the Man with the Scythe appears occasionally even in Shakespeare's sonnets. And Marvell ironically speaks of the approach of "Time's winged Chariot." Essential to the Baroque mind is its love of contrasts and antitheses, and against the transience of the temporal world is set the stillness of eternity. Naturally enough, the eternal dimension is emphasized in particular by the religious poets, as in the poem of Vaughan on the vision of eternity, and the triumph of eternity over time and death affirmed again and again in Donne's *Holy Sonnets*. Thus, although seventeenth century English Literature added nothing to the classical conceptions of time and eternity, it may nevertheless have stimulated English to metaphysical speculation.

[34] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 52.

[35] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* in *Elizabethan and Stuart* Plays, ed. Charles Read Baskervill, et al. (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934), Act IV, Scene 1.

[36] Joel 2: 12-13, *The Holy Bible*.

[37] Cited by Duncan Jones, "Ash Wednesday," *T.S.Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands*, ed. B.Rajan (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947), p. 40.

[38] See Grover Smith, *T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, p. 261.

[39] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 50, p. 55, p. 67.

[40] *The Portable Emerson* (N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 343.

[41] W.B.Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 465. Yeats is quoting Vaughan.

[42] *King Lear*, Act IV, sc. vii, ll. 46-48.

[43] Dante, Paradiso, ed. H. Oelsner, with a translation by Philip H. Wicksteed (Dent, 1899), Canto XXXIII, ll. 142-145.

[44] St.Augustine, *Confessions*, with an English transl. by W.Watts (1631), I-II, (London, 1946), VIII, 5: 10.

[45] Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 139.

[46] T.S.Eliot in his Introduction to Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 5.

CHAPTER 6

MAYA

"The unreal never is; the real never is not."

- *The Bhagavad Gita*

"Mirror upon mirror mirrored is all the show."

- W.B.Yeats

So then, flux and suffering are inseparable from existence. People change with time, act and remember, weep and smile, but the agony abides and even the laughter in the rose-garden points before and after to the agony of birth and death.

The cause of such suffering is disclosed as craving to Arjuna by Krishna in the *Gita*:

> All is clouded in desire; as the fire by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an unborn babe by its covering.
> Wisdom is clouded by desire, the everpresent enemy of the wise, desire in its innumerable forms, which like a fire cannot find satisfaction.[1]

The same truth is revealed by the Buddha to his monks in his first sermon in the Deer Park:

> The Noble Truth of the origin of suffering, O monks, is this: it is this thirst (craving) which produces re-existence and re-becoming; bound up with passionate greed. It finds fresh delight now here and now there, namely, thirst for sense pleasures; thirst for existence and becoming; and thirst for non-existence (self-annihilation).[2]

This thirst (*tanha*) for life or craving for the transient things of this phenomenal world is explicitly discouraged by Christ too in the Gospels.

The characters in Eliot's early poems are possessed by an incessant craving for sensual gratifications and this desire breeds attachment in them to things which are ephemeral. Consequently, their craving or thirst is never satisfied and their lives are full of suffering.

Prufrock, for instance, drags out a maimed and crippled existence, tormented by unappeasable desires. An aging and inhibited dreamer, imprisoned by his shabby genteel environment, he is obsessed by the spectacle of lust around him:

> And I have known the arms already, known them all -
> Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
> (But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
> Is it perfume from a dress
> That makes me so digress?
> Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
>
> (LP, p. 15)

Yet he lacks the courage to break out of his mold; he dare not "disturb the universe," and ask a lady at a party "the overwhelming question," (LP, p. 15) for that would upset the comfortable pattern of his 'civilized' life. We know at the end of the poem that Prufrock will continue to circulate in the drawing-rooms where "women come and go talking of Michaelangelo" and that he will continue to measure out his life with "coffee spoons," a prey to conflicting desires. (LP, p. 14) In short, he has resigned himself to the bondage of the wheel.

Presumably, this is the common lot of the inhabitants of the world displayed in the poems that succeed "Prufrock." The young man in "Portrait of a Lady" commits "a psychological rape" by "penetrating to the depths of the lady's lonely and empty life,"[3] while the lady, aware that life and youth are slipping away from her, clings pathetically to a companionship that might develop into something deeper. Mr.Apollinax, who laughs like "an irresponsible foetus" at the norms of polite society is a shocking sensualist, despite his vigour and ebullience. (MA, p. 31) Apeneck Sweeney, who knows "the female temperament," loves to flaunt his body, "pink from nape to base" and spends his time guarding "the horned gate." (SE, p. 42, SAN, p. 56) Grishkin tempts one to seize and clutch and penetrate sensual experience: "Uncorseted, her friendly bust / Gives promise of pneumatic bliss." (WI, p. 52) Burbank is aware of literary and artistic values apart from his Baedeker, but his knowledge does not prevent him from falling for the charms of Princess Volupine. One and all, they are enchained to the wheel, whirled about by shifting desires.

Gerontion contrasts the secular history of mankind of which his own life forms a tiny part, with the ignored promise of redemption through a man-God like Christ (or the Buddha). He symbolizes civilization gone rotten. The world of his thoughts is peopled by frustrated society ladies, corrupt financiers and decayed nobility, who lead lives of quiet desperation, full of debauchery and self-indulgence. What he describes is "the unstilled world" (AW, p. 96) - to borrow a phrase from Ash Wednesday - the turning wheel and not the still point, wherein lust perishes and love fructifies into compassion. Gerontion realizes that within the flux of history, man cannot but split into "fractured atoms" (G, p. 39)and that permanence resides only at the still centre, which is now "Swaddled with darkness." (G, p. 37) But he himself has not attained the still point; for, though he has lost the "passion" of his youth, he has not yet outgrown the memories of that passion. His thoughts still have the power to "Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled, / With pungent sauces." (G, p. 38) Consequently, he continues to be bound to the wheel, whose horror he perceives, but cannot escape.

At the very core of The Waste Land, the Buddha and St.Augustine are brought together. This particular section of the poem is called "The Fire Sermon." Like the original Fire Sermon of the Buddha, the poem deals with human bondage due to lustful desire for transitory things of this world. But Eliot extends the principle expounded by the Buddha and ranges the Buddha and St.Augustine - and implicitly Christ and the Upanishadic sages - as an "army of unalterable law" (CN, p. 30) against the Sweeneys and Mrs.Porters of this world. Though the Buddha and St. Augustine were separated from each other by time and space, yet they are united in Tiresias' consciousness and share a common concern: to trace the origin of suffering. They conclude that suffering springs from craving or thirst for the 'love of created things' and both use fire as a symbol of the craving that devours man, binds him down to the turning world and prevents him from attaining nirvana or union with the divine essence. This craving or tanha, in its widest sense, stands for that peculiar clinging to present existence and that incessant longing for future existence, which animates all beings in the phenomenal world. It is repeatedly associated with lust in the poem, lust which Shakespeare depicts as the "expense of spirit in a waste of shame." It is the lust of the barbarous king which rudely forces Philomela to a lower turn of the wheel and changes her into a nightingale; it is lust which brings Sweeney to Mrs.Porter in the spring and the young man carbuncular to the typist over the unlit stairs; it is lust which forms the topic of conversation among the working-class women in the pub and the theme of the song of the violated Thames daughters. And invariably, it brings suffering in its wake.

The symbolism of the wheel of birth and death is interwoven with the theme of craving throughout the poem to present a vivid picture of pain and suffering. Flux, suffering and craving are all projected through a complex image of joyless spring at the very beginning of the poem: April is "the cruellest month," (WL, p. 61) precisely because it mixes the "memory" of former existences in dead cities with the "desire" (craving or tanha) for the evanescent things of the world and causes the wheel to revolve, entangling mankind in the web of endless reincarnation and suffering.

The figurative straw dummies, shuffling despondently round and round the prickly pear in The Hollow Men, are inheritors of the desolation of the Waste Land. They are so apathetic that they do not assert their freedom by any spiritual or moral choice; rather, they are content to merely gratify their most immediate needs. The prickly pear around which they circle is a phallic symbol, denoting lust. It is substituted for the mulberry bush - a fertility symbol denoting love, according to Grover Smith[5] - in the parody of a nursery rhyme chanted by the hollow men as they go round and round in circles. Consequently, the dance of the hollow men around the prickly pear represents an absorption with sexuality to the exclusion of the still centre. This spiritually sterile condition of the hollow men is reflected by their desert environment, wherein their craving or thirst for sensual gratifications can never be allayed but can only lacerate their hearts with agony:

> In death's other kingdom
> Waking alone
> At the hour when we are
> Trembling with tenderness
> Lips that would kiss
> Form prayers to broken stone.

(HM, p. 84)

In short, the hollow men inhabit a nightmarish world, in which their desires involve them in continual suffering.

The spiritual distress of the protagonist of Ash Wednesday is akin to that of the Waste Landers and the Hollow Men; unlike them, however, he is aware of the cause of his suffering and is determined to remove it. He knows from the start what Tiresias does not learn till the end and what the Waste Landers and the hollow men never learn at all: the quest for the peace and certitude of the still point is possible only through the renunciation of desire for the transient pleasures of the turning world. The poem begins, therefore, with the protagonist's fervent wish to renounce desires and be freed of turning on the wheel:

> Because I do not hope to turn again
> Because I do not hope
> Because I do not hope to turn
> Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
> I no longer strive to strive towards such things . . .
>
> (_AW_, p. 89)

But he finds that it is not easy to give up one's attachment "to self to things and to persons" (LG, p. 195) and to cultivate detachment from the turning world. The human will is so delicately balanced that it is always capable of turning back to the temptations from which it has turned away. Thus, even while he is advancing toward the still centre, the protagonist cannot avoid a backward glance:

> At the first turning of the second stair
> I turned and saw below
> The same shape twisted on the banister
> Under the vapour in the fetid air
> Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
> The deceitful face of hope and despair.
>
> (_AW_, p. 93)

The worst struggle is past, but not left so far behind that it can be forgotten. As long as memory persists, desire has not been entirely vanquished. "The devil of the stairs" stands for the temptation of the turning world, which provokes false hope and its related despair, a temptation which undermines the detachment prayed for by the protagonist. Needless to say, detachment does not mean indifference. Indifference is callous unconcern for the suffering of one's fellow-beings in the world, whereas detachment is freedom from egotistic self-seeking, a condition attainable by those whose selfish desires have been consumed in the fire of God's love, so that they are compassionate towards all suffering beings and do them selfless service. When this detachment is not present, one is still prey to the thirst (*tanha*) for sensual gratifications and participates in the vanity fair of "the unstilled world," (*AW*, p. 96) whose movement is apparently contradictory to the silent Word.

This "unstilled world" is graphically described in the third movement of "Burnt Norton" as

> a place of disaffection
> Time before and time after
> In a dim light . . .
>
> (BN, p. 173)

"Disaffection" stands for indifference or "tumid apathy" towards the sufferings of one's fellow-beings. This indifference, no less than attachment to the transient beauties and pleasures of the phenomenal world, confines one to the "slow rotation" (BN, p. 173) of the wheel. For, apathy brutalizes and stupefies the average human being, so that he becomes one of the hollow men and inhabits the cactus land. And, because of him and others like him, the turning world appears to be in opposition to the still point.

The contrary movement of the "unstilled world" in time is comparable to the confined motion of a train on its rails:

> the world moves
> In appetancy, on its metalled ways
> Of time past and future.
>
> (BN, p. 174)

Appetancy (Aristotle's *oréxis*) involves concupiscence besides mere appetite; it is that which motivates one to cling on to one's present existence and to yearn for its continuation in the future. This appetancy, in the form of will to live against all odds, is repeatedly associated with the oncoming of spring in Eliot's poetry, but with overtones of pain. For instance, in "East Coker," craving and pain are projected through a complex image of spring out of season, wherein birth is aborted and hopes of life crushed:

> What is the late November doing
> With the disturbance of the spring
> And creatures of the summer heat
> And snowdrops writhing under feet
> And hollyhocks that aim too high
> Red into grey and tumble down
> Late roses filled with early snow?
>
> (EC, p. 178)

The unnatural disturbance of the seasons represents the disorder of the human spirit that results when earthly desires are given free rein. And this because

> Desire itself is movement
> Not in itself desirable
>
> (BN, p. 175)

binding man down to the flux of the turning world and causing him unending anxiety and misery. In other words, desire confines man to the circumference of the wheel, clots "the bedded axle-tree" (BN, p. 172) and prevents him from attaining the still centre, which alone can impart

> The inner freedom from the practical desire,
> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And outer compulsion . . .
>
> (BN, p. 173)

Becket, in Murder in the Cathedral, is acutely conscious that desire or craving for the gratifications of the phenomenal world constitutes a major impediment to the apprehension of the still point.

His Four Tempters try to deflect him from his end, by confronting him with desire in various forms. He summarily dismisses the perfunctory temptations of worldly pleasure, of power (through subservience to the king) and of influence (through alliance with the barons). But the Fourth Tempter proves almost too much for him; for, as Becket himself admits, the Fourth Tempter tempts him with his own "desires," his own dreams of "eternal grandeur," of an "enduring crown" to be won through martyrdom. (MC, p. 255) He realizes, however, that he is arrogating to himself the powers of God in consciously willing himself to martyrdom. So he renounces his desire and humbly resigns himself to the task of "making perfect his will" (MC, p. 271) to fit the divine purpose.

Harry, in The Family Reunion, is aware that he is bound on a "burning wheel" of memory and desire, from which he seeks escape by violence, (FR, p. 294) by pushing his wife overboard in the mid-Atlantic. But he finds his suffering augmented, not reduced, by such violent action; his past haunts him so that he is compelled to lead a nightmarish existence and to describe himself as one who keeps moving

> In and out, in an endless drift
> Of shrieking forms in a circular desert . . .
>
> (FR, p. 335)

He comes to understand through Agatha, however, that it is possible to transcend his insane hell of despair and that suffering can be a means to purgation. He learns to accept with Agatha that "the past is irremidiable" and that "the future can only be built / Upon the real past." (FR, p. 336) Brooding pessimistically on past action or struggling vainly against its present and future consequences is tantamount to lunacy and cannot free him from the flux of time and circumstance. On the other hand, acceptance of "what can't be got rid of" makes him feel quite happy, for it brings him what Agatha calls "relief" -

> relief from what had happened
> Is also relief from that unfulfilled craving
> Flattered in sleep and deceived in waking.
>
> (emphasis mine) (FR, p. 336)

He recovers his sanity, so to speak, and starts to believe like Agatha that the flux can somehow be overcome and the turns of the wheel be stilled in the unmoving centre. This fresh insight he has into the nature of existence marks the beginning of his "pursuit of liberation." (FR, p. 331) Urged by Agatha and his own inner self, he declines to settle down as his mother wishes, to a safe and comfortable life in his ancestral home; instead, he chooses the hard and self-sacrificing life of a missionary in a harsh environment among humble people.

The Cocktail Party deals with the frustration and despair that result from man-woman relationships, in which there is only desire and not love. Edward and Lavinia are married to each other, but find themselves incapable of loving each other. Lavinia has an extra-marital relationship with Peter, a young film-writer, who thinks he is in love with Celia. Celia, in turn, is Edward's mistress. All of them are conscious of the emptiness of their lives and suffer acutely, but they do not know why. In the course of events, they discover the root cause of their suffering to be attachment "to self and to things and to persons" (LG, p. 195) and modify their lives, according to the prescription of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, an analytical psychologist. Edward and Lavinia find that they share the same isolation, because both of them are really in love with themselves. Lacking an apprehension of the still point, they do not recognize their dependence on God; hence, their act of loving does not reflect their love for the creator and their relationship leads to mutual disillusionment and despair. Like Narcissus, they see in each other's face only a reflection of their own selfish needs. Or, as Sir Henry points out, they carry with them "the shadow of desires of desires." (CP, p. 410) They occupy, so to speak, the periphery of the turning wheel and share the eccentric propulsion of the damned. All that they can do now is to follow Sir Henry's advice and make "the best of a bad job." (CP, p. 410) Their only consolation is that they know themselves to be what they are -

> A man who finds himself incapable of loving
> And a woman who finds that no man can love her.
>
> (CP, p. 410)

This self-knowledge is what they have in common, a bond that holds them both together, while they are "still in a state of unenlightenment," (CP, p. 410) unaware of the nature of Buddhahood or the still point. Celia discovers that she had not really loved Edward, when she was his mistress; she had merely been in love with an image of her own needs:

> The man I saw before, he was only a projection -
> I see that now - of something I wanted -
> No, not wanted - something I aspired to -
> Something I desperately wanted to exist.
>
> (CP, p. 382)

By her honesty, she compels Edward to recognize that he had never loved her, but only desired her and now he had lost even the "desire for all that was most desirable." (CP, p. 381) Whereas Edward's growing awareness of himself leads to a reconciliation with Lavinia, Celia's self-knowledge intensifies her quest for the peace of the still point that passes understanding. She too seeks Sir Henry's counsel, wanting

> to be cured
> Of a craving for something I cannot find
> And of the shame of never finding it.
>
> (emphasis mine) (CP, p. 417)

Her craving, however, is no longer for the transitory pleasures of the phenomenal world; she has passed beyond them and now yearns for the love of God. Under Sir Henry's guidance, she chooses the hard and lonely way of the contemplative mystic that finally leads her, like Becket, to martyrdom. After Celia's death by crucifixion in the missionary outpost of Kinkanja, Peter learns through Lavinia that he had not loved Celia; he had merely been deluded by his own desires:

> What you've been living on is an image of Celia
> Which you made for yourself, to meet your own needs.
>
> (_CP_, p. 435)

He recognizes this to be the truth and admits that all along he has only been interested in himself. Sobered by this self-knowledge and with the memory of Celia's self-sacrifice to live up to, he resumes his artistic career in films. Though he is still bound to the turning wheel, he is now aware of the existence of the still point and of the selfish desires that cause him to suffer by obscuring the still point.

The Confidential Clerk provides a dramatic illustration of the emptiness that ensues when man devotes himself to a career, in the world of art or of business, without an awareness of the still point. Sir Claude has given up his dream of being an artist of pottery to become a businessman. But he finds himself living in a world of "make-believe," (_CC_, p. 466) from which he periodically escapes by retreating to a room containing his creations of china and porcelain. He realizes that these _objets d' art_ enable him occasionally to enter a "real world" in which he experiences

> that sense of identification
> With the maker, . . . - an agonising ecstasy
> Which makes life bearable.
>
> (_CC_, p. 466)

But he lacks the strength to commit himself whole-heartedly to art and act as an instrument of the divine purpose. He is not a good business-man either, since he does not share his father's passion for business. And since he has built his life on self-deception, his attempts to find an outlet for his frustrations through love for his illegitimate son, Colby, are also thwarted. Hence, he has only his attachment to his potter's creations to live by, an attachment that does not culminate in the love of God and his fellow-beings. It only binds him ever more firmly to the turning world and prolongs his agony. Colby too has relinquished his ideal of being a musician, a great organist, to become Sir Claude's confidential clerk. From time to time, he too withdraws into the "secret garden," as his half-sister Lucasta calls it, of hi "inner garden." (CC, p. 472) But Colby cannot rest content with a part-time consolation. He knows that he has to make a commitment that makes both his inner and outer life meaningful; in other words, he has to choose between a life of divided loyalties and a life of single-minded-ness that reaches toward the still point. Despite this awareness, Colby finally finds himself incapable of making an existential choice. He welcomes an opportunity of working as a church organist, but he does not take kindly to the suggestion that he make spiritual capital out of sacred music and eventually take to priesthood. At the end, therefore, Colby and Sir Claude, despite their self-knowledge, are still bound to the wheel, wallowing in the welter of attachment "to self and to things and to persons." (LG, p. 195)

Lord Claverton in The Elder Statesman, is forced step by step to strip himself of his false masks as distinguished administrator, irre-proachable father and husband, and accept the truth about his real nature. Confronted by a former friend and mistress, whom he calls the "Spectres from my past" (ES, p. 569) and who accuse him of having corrupted their natures and violated their loves, he is compelled to recognize that he has spent his life exploiting others in order to gratify his own selfish desires for power and pride of conquest. He confesses his past errors to Charles and Monica and thus takes "the first step" towards his "freedom." (ES, p. 572) He decides that he will no longer flee his spectres, but turn and confront them. He endures the humiliation and suffering inherent in his past attachment "to self and to things and to persons." (LG, p. 195) He finds himself a helpless spectator, when his son, Michael, is lured away by his "spectres" to a corrupt life at San Marco. Knowing full well that he has himself paved his son's way to moral turpitude by setting a bad example, Lord Claverton accepts his son's repudiation of his former mode of existence with equanimity:

> And Michael -
> I love him, even for rejecting me,
> For the me he rejected, I reject also.
> I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;
> And in becoming no one, I begin to live.
>
> (ES, p. 582)

He realizes that all along he has dominated his children, so that he could see his own desires reflected in them and thus believe his own "pretences." He dies to his false self and is reborn as "the man he really is." Having understood his past and repudiated the craving (or tanha) for the perpetuation of his pretentious self, he gains peace and is "brushed by the wing of happiness." (ES, p. 581)

Craving and its concomitant suffering, then, have as much significance in the universal scheme of things for Eliot as for Krishna, the Buddha and Christ. To be a slave of shifting desires, without realizing that they give birth to endless suffering, is to be blindly caught up in the revolutions of the wheel; it is avidya or ignorance. Not to seek a way out of this bondage to the wheel is to be involved in the darkness of maya or the world of appearances.

The term maya has a long history in Indian thought. In the Rig Veda, it is used to denote a mysterious deceptive power of the gods. In the Upanishads, the Lord wields the power of maya to order Nature (prakriti) and conjure up the world of appearances. Nature, then, is the manifestation of the Lord's creative power, of his maya, and Nature is capable of deluding man, when he takes it to be an independent ultimate reality. Thus, we read in the Svetasvatara Upanishad:

> For all the sacred books, all holy sacrifice and ritual and prayers, all the words of the Vedas, and the whole past and present and future, come from the Spirit. With Maya, his power of wonder, he made all things, and by Maya the human soul is bound.
> Know therefore that nature is Maya, but that God is the ruler of Maya; and that all beings in our universe are parts of his infinite splendour.[6]

The Gita deals even more emphatically with the same concept:

> Helpless all, for Maya is their master,
> And I, their Lord, the master of this Maya . . .
> Maya makes all things: what moves, what is unmoving.
> O son of Kunti, that is why the world spins,
> Turning its wheel through birth
> And through destruction.[7]

The concept of maya attains its fullest flowering in the non-dualistic (a-dvaita) Vedanta of the eighth century philosopher, Sankara, who was responsible for reviving the Hindu way of life by reinforcing the non-dual reality (Brahman) of the Upanishads and the Gita. According to the non-dualistic interpretation, the one indivisible unchanging reality (Brahman), or that which is, appears to be many and constitutes the world of our everyday experience. Our perception of an independent material world of objects, persons and processes is grounded in a pervasive error. We take the unreal for real and the real for unreal. This is borne out by the famous analogy of the snake and the rope. We often mis-take a coil of rope for a snake in the dark; but, on closer examination, we discover it to be only a coil of rope. Our everyday world of appearances may be likened to a snake, and it seems very real to us; we are in the darkness of ignorance, caught in the web of illusion. When we are illumined, we experience the truth; the snake-appearance vanishes into the underlying reality of the rope. This does not mean that the world of appearances is non-existent; the world, according to Sankara, "is and is not."[8] When we are in a state of ignorance, it is experienced by our everyday consciousness, and it exists as it appears; as long as we are in the dark, the snake appears quite real to us. But when we are enlightened and pass into a transcendental consciousness, the world is no longer experienced, and it ceases to exist; once we are illumined, the snake disappears and the rope alone is real. Here, then, we are confronted by a paradox - the world is and the world is not. It is neither real nor non-existent. And yet this apparent paradox is simply a statement of fact - a fact which Sankara calls maya. This maya, this world-appearance, has its basis in Brahman, the one indivisible unchanging reality; and maya not only conceals reality, but also distorts it. Brahman remains eternally infinite and unchanged. It is not transformed into the world. It simply appears as this world to us, in our ignorance. Not only do we fail to perceive reality, but we also superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope in the dark. In short, we substitute a phenomenal world for the noumenon and take the unreal for real and the real for unreal; we are subject to maya, to the world-appearance. Maya is characterized as beginningless (anadi), since time arises only within it; as unthinkable (acintya), for all thought is subject to it; as indescribable (anirvaçania) for all conceptual language results from it. To seek to know what causes maya is to go beyond maya - and when we do that, maya vanishes like a mirage in the desert, for the effect ceases to exist, and there is only Brahman, the one unchanging reality. And so Sankara concludes:

> The universe does not exist apart from Brahman. Our perception of it as having an independent existence is false, like our perception of blueness in the sky. How can a superimposed attribute have any existence, apart from its substratum? It is only our delusion which causes this mis-conception of the underlying reality.[9]

No matter what we think we are perceiving in our delusion, we are really seeing Brahman and nothing else but Brahman; only we are not aware of this in our ignorance. We see the coil of rope and imagine it to be a snake; we see mother-of-pearl and imagine it to be silver. We see Brahman and imagine it to be the world.

It is noteworthy that Sankara's concept of maya and Brahman is analogous to Bradley's theory of appearance and reality, on which Eliot wrote his doctoral dissertation. Staffan Bergsten's comments in this regard are highly interesting:

> Long after he had finished his academic study of Bradley, Eliot wrote an essay on him which suggests his appreciation of the semi-religious metaphysician rather than the logician. The religious element underlying Bradley's concept of the Absolute had been noticed before, and it is significant that his philosophy has been compared with Vedic philosophy - as the bewildering illusions of Maya are brought to harmony in Brahman, so are appearances in reality.[10]

At the very outset of his magnum opus, Appearance and Reality, Bradley declares the aim of his work: it will demonstrate the fact that the world "contradicts itself; and is, therefore, appearance, and not reality."[11] He subjects to critical scrutiny the basic ideas and intellectual formulae through which man attempts to solve the riddle of the universe, such as motion and change, space, time and causation, self *et cetera* and shows that they are all riddled with contradictions and do not comprise the whole truth. He is driven to conclude that the finite human experience of the world is not the experience of reality *as* reality, though it is the experience *of* reality. What is given to finite human experience, therefore, is not reality *qua* reality, but only appearances; and yet, "there is reality in every appearance however slight."[12] In short, reality is distorted into self-contradictory appearances in a wholly inexplicable manner:

> The fact of appearance, and of the diversity of its particular spheres, we found was inexplicable. Why there are appearances, and why appearances of such various kinds, are questions not to be answered.[13]

This admission of the fact of world-appearance and its ultimate inexplicability is precisely what is called *maya* by Sankara in his non-dualistic (*a-dvaita*) interpretation of the Upanishads and the *Gita*.

Bradley differs, however, on one crucial point from Sankara. According to Bradley, reality *as* reality (that which is or the noumenon) cannot be experienced. He writes:

> Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible. In order thus to know we should have to be, and then *we* should not exist . . . But to gain an idea of its main features . . . is a different endeavour. And it is a task in which we may succeed.[14]

Unlike Bradley, Sankara maintains that *Brahman* (or reality *qua* reality) can be concretely experienced and that, in experiencing that reality, we cease to exist as separate individuals. In other words, our individuality or ego is due to our ignorance (*avidya*) and is part of the world-appearance (maya). When enlightenment comes, it is destroyed in the light of pure being that is Brahman, and we are said to have attained nirvana or freedom from the bondage of the wheel of samsara. Sankara's assertion that the ultimate reality of Brahman can be concretely experienced is in consonance with the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita.

It cannot be denied that Eliot upholds the possibility of attaining the reality of the still point, the silent centre around which all the world turns. He even goes so far as to say that most of us are vouchsafed "hints and guesses" (DS, p. 190) about the nature of the ultimate reality, though we are often incapable of the total apprehension possible to a saint. He seems, therefore, to have inclined more towards the vision (darshana) of ultimate reality enshrined in the Upanishads, the Gita and the non-dualistic (a-dvaita) Vedanta of Sankara than towards the agnosticism of Bradley. Moreover, the Christian writers Eliot drew upon, whether it be St.Augustine, St.John of the Cross, Dante or Lancelot Andrewes, are all unequivocal in declaring that it is possible to be united with the divine essence. Presumably, therefore, Bradley had only a limited influence on Eliot's ethos. However, in his poetic evocation of the multiple facets of the turning world and its unreality in the light of the still point, Eliot seems to have amalgamated what Bradley calls the inexplicable fact of world-appearance with what Sankara, following the Upanishads and the Gita, calls maya.

Thus, the characters in Eliot's early poems may all be seen to be subject to maya, deluded by the world of appearances. Prufrock's existence is literally and metaphorically enveloped in a foggy atmosphere of unreality. He is conscious of having wasted his time in futile pursuits of self-gratification, of having measured out his life "with coffee spoons." (LP, p. 14) He cannot bring himself to ask his lady "the overwhelming question," (LP, p. 15) for that would destroy the comfortable illusion of his ordered world. He yearns to escape from his meaningless crippled existence, but his impulse to freedom lacks focus, so that he takes refuge in his dream-world of singing mermaids. He finds that he cannot even pin-point the source of his anguish:

> It is impossible to say just what I mean!
> But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns
> on a screen . . .
>
> (LP, p. 16)

It is an unconscious yet precise echo of Sankara's concept of maya; it cannot be described, for all words and thoughts are its direct outcome. Prufrock's world, in short, has only an apparent reality, like the "patterns on a screen" and when he gropes for words to describe his existential situation or to indicate the nameless something he yearns for, he finds himself helpless and frustrated, reduced to shadow-boxing with reality.

The "Preludes" are unified by their imagery, which lends an air of unreality to the scenes and actors encountered in them. The first poem begins with winter nightfall in an urban backstreet, and moves from indoor gloom and the confined odour of cooking to the smoky twilight outside, in which a gusty wind whips up the withered leaves and soiled newspapers, and raindrops spatter the housetops. The second poem reviews the street, as morning "comes to consciouness" of "faint stale smells of beer" and coffee fumes, like a person who has been all night out drinking and wakes up with a hang-over; and the poem ends by contemplating the house windows, where innumerable hands reveal "the other masquerades / That time resumes," by "raising the dingy shades." (P, p. 22) The third poem peeps into one of the "thousand furnished rooms" in which a rather dirty woman shakes off her sleep and sluggishly tries to get out of her bed; she has watched

> the night revealing
> The thousand sordid images
>
> (P, p. 23)

of which her soul is constituted flickering "against the ceiling," and now struggles to regain her day-to-day consciousness in order to resume her role in life's masquerade. The "thousand sordid images" of which her soul is constituted are comparable to the transitory show of fingers, pipes, newspapers and eyes that constitute the soul of the personified street in the fourth poem. In other words, woman and street are both mere congeries of fugitive appearances; they are both earthbound, she supine in her bed and 'he' trampled by insistent feet. Nevertheless, both are vaguely aware of a hidden reality behind the apparent purposelessness of their existence; for, instinctively their aspirations tend heavenward as they strive to free themselves: her soul's "images" flicker overhead, while her soul is "stretched tight across the skies." (P, p. 23) The "thousand sordid images" of the woman's soul and the 'passing show' of the street impinge on reality, so to speak, as upon a tabula rasa, and mask that reality from their consciousness. In short, they are bedevilled by maya or the world-appearance. Consequently, their struggle upward is blind and their struggle seems endless; so, the poem turns to the notion "of some infinitely gentle / Infinitely suffering thing," (P, p. 23) of a compassionate Buddha or Christ figure, who can help suffering humanity penetrate the veil of *maya* and attain the reality beyond.

The protagonist of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" has a consciousness resembling that of the woman in the "Preludes," which marshals the flickering kaleidoscopic images into a pattern of subjective *dureé*, so that he too has "a vision of the street." Each street lamp he passes on his midnight ramble seems to beat like a "fatalistic drum," murmuring "lunar incantations," (RWN, p. 24) directing his gaze towards new spatial images, which pass into his memory and combine with memories already there to make up his vision. The rhapsody of his consciousness moves like a symphony, introducing, abandoning and returning to certain *leitmotifs* - the apparent irrationality or meaninglessness of events in time and the inexorable dissolution and death that await all animate being. The images that invade the speaker's consciousness and take possession are all depressing and point up the apparent meaninglessness of the universe. In fact, these images constitute his soul; he can no more escape the bleak landscape conjured up by his imagination than the woman of the "Preludes" can avoid the sordid pattern traced on her ceiling by her dreams. Even as he retreats into the solitude of his bed-room, the last street lamp lights his way up the stairs and reminds him that his *memory* has the key to free him from life's prison - not the memory of what his intelligence can learn, like the number on his door, but the memory of a hidden reality, of that which is, behind life's masquerade. Nevertheless, memory alone of the hidden reality is not enough; human effort is required to rend the veil of appearances or *maya*. Lacking this effort, the protagonist is overcome by the terror of his own trapped condition and the knowledge of his powerlessness to emancipate himself pierces him with a "last twist of the knife." (RWN, p. 26)

Gerontion is a logical extension of the nameless protagonist of "Rhapsody." As he squats outside his "decayed house," an old man driven to "a sleepy corner" (G, p. 39) and awaiting his death, his mind is busy, occupied with the remembrance of things past. He is acutely conscious of the futility of a world in which man blindly stumbles down the "contrived corriodors" of history, (G, p. 38) lured by vanity and deceived by success, reluctant to choose "Christ the tiger" above mere sensual gratifications - it is the futility of a maze whose centre man can no longer perceive. Despite this knowledge, Gerontion himself is incapable of reaching the centre of the turning world; like his corrupt foreïgn acquaintances, he too must share the eccentric propulsion of the damned around the still centre of the wheel. No doubt, he has lost the passion for earthly pleasures in his old age; but passion is strongest in memory and his sensual thoughts still have the power to

> Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
> With pungent sauces, multiply variety
> In a wilderness of mirrors.
>
> (G, p. 38)

The unity behind the diversity of these mirror images is hidden from him; maya holds him yet in its relentless grip, distorting and concealing reality by its multitudinous appearances.

The modern figure of Gerontion is replaced by the mythological Tiresias to unify the diversities of The Waste Land.[15] Tiresias is more shadowy than Gerontion, so that most of the incidents in the poem seem immediate, not recalled, even though they are his memories of things past. The apparently disorganized flow of past events in his consciousness is so vivid and arresting that these events become present themselves. In short, Tiresias _relives_ his memories, as Kurtz does in Conrad's story, witnessing all of his past lives "in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender" unroll before his vision.[16] "What Tiresias _sees_," therefore, "is the substance of the poem" (_WL_, p. 78) - a collage of images, mystifying statements and dramatic encounters superimposed by his own mind on the basic substratum of reality.

It is perhaps instructive at this point to quote the words of Sri Ramana Maharishi, one of the greatest modern exponents of the philosophy of non-duality (_advaita vedanta_) on the phenomenon of _maya_. Sri Ramana is no mere academic theoretician, but a seer, in the living tradition of the Upanishadic sages. He speaks, therefore, simply and clearly, with the authority of 'one who knows' from personal experience:

> 'You see various scenes passing on a cinema screen; fire seems to burn buildings to ashes; water seems to wreck ships; but the screen on which the pictures are projected remains unburnt and dry. Why? Because the pictures are unreal and the screen real.
> 'Similarly, reflections pass through a mirror but it is not affected at all by their number and quality.
> 'In the same way, the world is a phenomenon upon the substratum of the single Reality which is not affected by it in any way. Reality is only One.
> ' . . . Being now immersed in the world, you see it as a real world; get beyond it and it will disappear and Reality alone will remain.[17]

This might almost be a summing up of "what Tiresias _sees_" in _The Waste Land_. He is an uncommon spectator though, unlike most of mankind who are so immersed in the 'passing show' that they fail to recognize it as mere appearance. He is conscious that the other characters and their expressions are fused together in his consciousness and constitute his reveries:

> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs,
> Perceived the scene, foretold all the rest . . .
>
> (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all . . .
>
> (*WL*, p. 68-69)

His consciousness may well be described in the words of Bradley in *Appearance and Reality*, which Eliot quoted in his notes to *The Waste Land*: his consciousness forms "a circle closed on the outside," a private world peopled by appearances. (*WL*, p. 80) And, curiously enough, he is not merely a spectator of the gyrations of life within the maze of his consciousness, but also a participant in the past actions he now recalls. He participates as "I Tiresias" in such flashback scenes as the fortune-telling of Madame Sosostris, the fornication of the typist with the young man carbuncular and the journey across the desert to where the thunder is heard. And simultaneously, in his capacity as spectator, he is watching himself take part in the 'passing show.' He is, so to speak, the dreaming Alice of the Waste Land, who vividly recalls the episodes in which he figured prominently. At the beginning, middle and end of the poem, therefore, he functions as a chorus, synthesizing and commenting on the actions of all those who inhabit his dream, including himself. On each occasion, he perceives that neither the actors nor their deeds partake of the ultimate reality; they are all mere shadows, insubstantial as a dream. He does not use the word *maya* when he sums up these appearances; he prefers the word 'unreal' in each instance. Thus, the solidity of London and its crowds is only apparent:

> Unreal city
> Under the brown fog of a winter noon . . .
>
> (*WL*, p. 62)

And because of the turns of the wheel, history is circular; what is true of London is true of other cities too:

> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal
>
> (WL, p. 73)

The Jewish, Greek and Egyptian civilizations have all declined; the civilizations of modern Europe will follow in their wake. And those who inhabit these cities, the centres of modern civilization, are all (as the allusion to Baudelaire makes clear) ghosts of former lives, enacting the same roles again and again: "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!" (WL, p. 62)

As a commenting spectator of the 'passing show,' Tiresias is capable of empathizing with the sufferings of his fellow-beings bound on the wheel, like the lama in Kim. Or, as Christmas Humphreys puts it in his informative book on Buddhism, he is one of the few

> whose lives are sufficiently unhappy, or who have sufficiently withdrawn themselves from the appearance of happiness in their own or in their neighbours' lives to be able to hear, in the stillness of the night or above the turmoil of the day, the ceaseless cry of anguish which rises from a blindly groping, sorrow-laden world.[18]

Consequently, he can sense the sufferings of those who inhabit the unreal cities of the world:

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only . . .
>
> (WL, p. 73)

This "ceaseless cry of anguish" mingles with the falling towers of the unreal cities to evoke in his consciousness a nightmarish vision of civilization in chaos.

Tiresias bears witness, then, to the fact of world-appearance or maya, of which he too forms a part. He has refined his consciousness to such an extent that he is aware of his bondage to the wheel. He has only a hint of liberation - a tantalizing glimpse into "the heart of light" he once had in the hyacinth garden. (WL, p. 62) And he has only his "fragments" at the end - touchstones, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, with which to test the stages of his inward progress toward the freedom of nirvana. And to encourage him on his way, he has the promise of grace - "a damp gust bringing rain." (WL, p. 74)

Unlike Tiresias, the speaker in The Hollow Men does not have the courage to accept his spiritual distress and to strive for the still centre of the turning world. Instead, he is sunk in apathy and declines to think of himself as anything but a scarecrow among other scarecrows, shuffling despondently round and round the prickly pear, or loitering beside "the tumid river" (HM, p. 85) like a throng awaiting the barge of Charon to ferry them across to everlasting torment. He knows, however, that they are all in "death's dream kingdom" (emphasis mine) (HM, p. 84) and that they must remain "sightless" as long as they are content with their futile and apathetic existence in this land of shadows. He realizes, moreover, that it is still possible for them to wake to reality and seek love through repentance in their nightmarish world. In other words, it is possible even for the hollow men to purge themselves of their desires, die to their self-centred existence and thus storm "death's twilight kingdom," (HM, p. 85) where they might behold the "Multifoliate rose" (HM, p. 85) betokening the ecstasy of the still point. But it is not easy, especially for those sunk in inertia like the hollow men, to cross "With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom." (HM, p. 83) A "Shadow" frustrates every effort to transform the potential into the actual:

> Between the idea
> And the reality
> Between the motion
> And the act
> Falls the shadow . . .
>
> (HM, p. 85)

The "Shadow" symbolizes the deceptive power of maya or the world-appearance. It is no child's play to 'wake' up from the 'dream' and penetrate the façade of appearances to the reality beyond. And so, at the end of the poem, the hollow men continue to suffer and turn on the wheel, incapable of striking out for the centre. They must still await grace, hope and pray for water in their cactus land.

The monologuist of Ash Wednesday is vouchsafed a light in the midst of darkness, a sign of grace amidst the delusions of maya: he is blessed with a vision of

> One who moves in the time between sleep and waking, wearing
> White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.
>
> (AW, p. 94)

She goes dressed "in white and blue, in Mary's colour," (AW, p. 94) heralding that which is beyond all shifting appearances and desires, and conveying to the protagonist's soul the possibility of the fusion of the human and the divine. Despite her silent affirmation of the Word, however, the monologuist is plunged in despair, for he is still in "the time of tension between dying and birth," (AW, p. 98) subject to the conflict between the values of the flesh and the spirit.[19] No doubt, he has renounced his desires for "this man's gift and that man's scope;" (AW, p. 89) no longer does he "mourn / The vanished power of the usual reign;" (AW, p. 89) nor does he "hope to know again / The infirm glory of the positive hour." (AW, p. 89)

Moreover, he fully realizes the limitations of the phenomenal world -

> that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is actual only for one time
> And only for one place . . .
>
> (AW, p. 89)

Above all, he yearns to go beyond the "unstilled world" and unite himself with the "silent Word." (AW, p. 96) Nevertheless, the memory of his desires still plague him and cause him to waver

> between the profit and the loss
> In this brief transit where the dreams cross
> The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying . . .
>
> (AW, p. 98)

Even his human longing for love and beauty have the power to deflect him from his purpose, for, in the ultimate analysis, love and beauty too belong to the "unstilled world" of appearances, they too are maya, reinforcing the dualism of the flesh and the spirit and barring the aspirant's way to the non-dual reality beyond. Consequently, the delightful pictures that flash before his mind's eye - "white sails . . . seaward flying / Unbroken wings" (AW, p. 98) - only breed attachment and the joy he feels is that of a "lost heart" for a phantasm:

> And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
> In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
> And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
> For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell . . .
>
> (AW, p. 98)

But it is all a delusion of "the blind eye" creating "empty forms" - the phantasmagoria of the turning world. Not surprisingly, the protagonist is baffled by the unreality of the "empty forms" - the insubstantiality, so to speak, of art as well as memory. His is the tragic portion of being caught in "the time of tension between dying and birth," wandering, one might say with Arnold,

> between two worlds, one dead
> The other powerless to be born.[20]

He is in a "place of solitude" where the sexual, artistic and spiritual ideals are all present as "dreams" and where the symbolic gates to eternity formed by the blue rocks and the yew trees await the resolution of his inner conflict between the world and the Word. Like the soul in "Animula," he seems powerless to "fare forward or retreat." (A, p. 107) But, from the depths of his dejection, he miraculously finds strength to pray to the Lady of his vision for deliverance from the bondage of the turning world:

> Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of
> the garden,
> Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
> Teach us to care and not to care
> Teach us to sit still . . .
>
> (AW, p. 98)

Only a serene and compassionate detachment akin to that of the Buddha, a humble acceptance of the divine will similar to that of the Christ, can enable him to penetrate the "falsehood" of "empty forms" or the illusion which "the blind eye creates" and go beyond the unreality of the "unstilled world" to "the centre of the silent Word." (AW, p. 96) Until that detachment and self-surrender are attained, he is under the sway of maya.

Except for the Four Quartets, all the major poems of Eliot - from "Prufrock" to Ash Wednesday - focus on the finite human consciousness and its gropings in "a wilderness of mirrors." (G, p. 38) These gropings and the accompanying thoughts and feelings all fall, in each poem, within the protagonist's own circle - a circle, we might say with

Bradley, "closed on the outside," (*WL*, p. 80) constituting a private world of appearances. None of the protagonists in these poems succeeds completely in breaking out of his / her closed self and apprehending the reality that is. At best, some of the protagonists are vouchsafed a tantalizing glimpse of the peace that this reality entails; they can only be patient, endure and await grace, in their "unstilled world." (*AW*, p. 96) In the *Four Quartets*, however, we sense for the first time that at least a partial breakthrough has been achieved by the poetic self. What has so far been obliquely alluded to as "the heart of the light" (*WL*, p. 62) or the "Multifoliate rose" (*HM*, p. 85) or "the centre of the silent Word" (*AW*, p. 96) is now precisely defined as "the still point of the turning world." (BN, p. 173) Moreover, the peace and freedom that ensue when the human soul reaches "the still point" is dwelt on in the paradoxical language of the mystics. Of course, "the turning world" is still very much with us; it has not disappeared from the *Quartets*. But the apprehension of the still point, partial though it may be, seems subtly to have altered the poetic perspective, so that what goes on in the turning world is viewed not only within the boundaries of time (*sub specie temporis*), but also in the light of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*). The creative word of the poet seems to partake of the nature of the all-fathering Word of the universe by bringing order out of chaos. Consequently, the efforts of the poetic self to find the word and the Word often appear identical, mirror images of each other. Nevertheless, in the ultimate analysis, the creative efforts of the poetic self take place in the temporal world of appearances; hence, they are subject to change and the poet must take note:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,

> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

(BN, p. 175)

The poet comments next on the "Shrieking voices" of unreason and chaos that always assail his words, enforcing them to undergo continuous change. Then, in a daring leap of thought upward from the temporal to the eternal, he shifts from "word" to "Word":

> The Word in the desert
> Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
> The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
> The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

(BN, p. 175)

The Word is the Logos, the complete meaning, the one reality that is, permanent and unchanging. When the Word becomes flesh, however, as in the person of a Christ (or Buddha), it too is subject to the power of maya or world-appearance and is assailed by "voices of temptation," death and phantasma. The Word, embodied in Christ or the poet, has to struggle against "the disconsolate chimera," enacting the very same conflict that beset the soul of the protagonist in Ash Wednesday. Yet, in the eternal perspective, there is only the Word, Logos, the complete meaning, the one permanent and unchanging reality, underlying Christ as well as the poet in the desert.

Clearly, all human attempts to describe either the still point or the turning world completely involve one in "the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings," (EC, p. 179) since all these attempts take place in the realm of maya, where everything is constantly in a state of flux. And knowledge derived from past experience has little value, for

> The knowledge imposes a pattern and falsifies.

(EC, p. 179)

We are all groping, so to speak, in Dante's "dark wood" or on the edge of the "grimpen" mire in Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles,

where is no secure foothold
And menaced by monsters, fancy lights,
Risking enchantment.

(EC, p. 179)

In other words, we are all ensnared by the web of maya. This is only too obvious to one, who has even momentarily apprehended the still point and is thus able to view his fellow-beings and their actions in the light of eternity:

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark.
. . .
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral.
Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.

(EC, p. 180)

Since most of mankind cannot bear very much reality, it continues to dwell in the darkness of ignorance, deluded by appearances and bound to the wheel, subject to change and suffering. Although there is but one Centre, most men live in centres of their own. This darkness, however, is not real; it may be vanquished by the other darkness, the immobility of St.John's Dark Night, 'the darkness of God':

As, in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness
on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the bold imposing façade are all being rolled away -

(EC, p. 180)

The "bold imposing façade" of maya vanishes[21] and there is no more diversity; there is only the unity of Brahman, the one eternal unchanging reality. The still point has absorbed the turning world.[22]

In an essay he wrote on John Marston, Eliot tried to isolate a quality that sets poetic drama apart from prosaic drama, a quality discernible in his own plays:

> It is possible that what distinguishes poetic drama from prosaic drama is a kind of doubleness in action, as if it took place on two planes at once. In this it is different from allegory, in which the abstraction is something conceived, not something differently felt, and from symbolism (as in the plays of Maeterlinck) in which the tangible world is deliberately diminished - both symbolism and allegory being operations of the conscious planning mind. In poetic drama a certain apparent irrelevance may be the symptom of this doubleness; or the drama has an under-pattern . . . the characters . . . are living at once on the plane that we know and on some other plane of reality.[23]

The characters in Eliot's plays may not always live on two planes at once; but usually, they contribute to a certain doubleness in action, when the play is considered in its entirety. On the surface, the characters appear to take part in simple, realistic events; actually, they are involved in a mythic or ritualistic mode of action. Either by deliberate symbolic motifs or by archetypal situations, Eliot manages to convey through his plays what he defines in his essay as

> a pattern behind the pattern into which the characters deliberately involve themselves; the kind of pattern which we perceive in our own lives only at rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowning in sunlight.[24]

Only gradually do we become aware of this subtly wrought "pattern behind the pattern," as if in its apprehension, we are re-enacting the poet's own painfully won apprehension of that greater pattern in which all contraries are reconciled. We become conscious of our dual citizenship in time and eternity and of a synthesizing power acting through us and making sense of seemingly opposite worlds.

The perception of the characters in Murder in the Cathedral are on different levels of refinement: Becket, the Priests, the Chorus of the Women of Canterbury, and the murderous Knights have, on a descending order, distinct conceptions of reality, ranging from the awesome spirituality of Becket to the depraved worldliness of the Knights. The cumulative effect is somewhat like the impression conveyed by a cubist painting, in which successive temporal states are depicted on the same spatial canvas (see Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase"). The characters perform their different functions simultaneously: the Knights are sinning, the Chorus and the Priests are suffering, Becket is martyring himself. This is 'tragedy' under the aspect of eternity, as it may appear to God; the internal conflicts of Becket and the Chorus, the uncertainty of the Priests, the arrogant self-assurance of the Knights are all microcosmic. Becket intuitively senses that the still wheel, as God beholds it, incorporates all the patterns of interlocking action and suffering which most of mankind can only view as flux. He knows that he has to combat deceptive appearances and temptations on his way to the reality of the still point:

> End will be simple, sudden, God-given.
> Meanwhile the substance of our first act
> Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.

(MC, p. 246)

He is not deflected from his purpose by temptations involving worldly gain. It is only when he is tempted by his own deeply hidden desire for martyrdom that he pauses, unsure of the course he should pursue. The Fourth Tempter flings his own seemingly wise words in Becket's teeth and all the four tempters chant in unison of the unreality (or *maya*) of temporal existence:

> Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment;
> All things are unreal,

> Unreal or disappointing;
> The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,
> The prizes given at the children's party,
> The prize awarded for the English Essay,
> The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration.
> All things become less real, man passes
> From unreality to unreality.

(*MC*, p. 256)

He realizes with a shock that he is courting disaster by imposing his own will over God's and initiating action and suffering in himself and others, as if he, not God, were the centre of the wheel. The only way in which he can reach the still point of the turning world is to surrender to the divine will. Those who act and suffer on their own initiative are inescapably on the wheel; but those who consent to the will of God are one with God, at the still point. Becket resolves, therefore, to submit himself and find his peace, like Dante, in God's will. His way is now clear through the miasma of *maya* to the still point.

The Family Reunion too contains different orders of reality, corresponding to the potentialities of the characters ranged within the play. Amy, her sister and their husbands are shallow, their vision circumscribed by the 'normal' world of appearances. They see only events and they are incapable of understanding any action that does not proceed from a selfish desire for sensory gratification. Harry is conscious of their hollowness and reprimands them for it soon after his arrival:

> You are all people
> To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual impact
> Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep,
> Never woken to the nightmare.

(*FR*, p. 293)

Harry is quite right in claiming that their life would be "unendurable," if they were "wide awake." (FR, p. 293) For, they are people who have taken the reality of this world for granted, people who are afraid to look beyond their ken. They are disquieted by Harry's passionate denunciation of their enslavement to the wheel, but cling desperately to their world of make-believe:

> We all of us make the pretension
> To be the uncommon exception
> To the universal bondage.
> . . .
> Why do we all behave as if the door might suddenly open,
> the curtains be drawn,
> The cellar make some dreadful disclosure, the roof disappear,
> And we should cease to be sure of what is real or unreal?
> Hold tight, hold tight, we must insist that the world is what
> we have always taken it to be.
>
> (FR, p. 301-302)

They are classic illustrations of the power of maya: they take the real for unreal and the unreal for real. On the other hand, Agatha and Mary are able to see beyond what appears to be real and they help Harry in his pursuit of liberation from the "universal bondage." When he comes back to Wishwood, Harry is in a condition of acute spiritual distress; he has not yet gained access to the transcendental realm to which Agatha holds the key but he is dissatisfied with his life in the phenomenal world. Like the anguished protagonist of Ash Wednesday, he exists between sleep and waking, in the "time of tension between dying and birth," and like him he is conscious of being alone with his predicament. He speaks of

> The sudden solitude in a crowded desert
> In a thick smoke, many creatures moving
> Without direction, for no direction
> Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour -
> Without purpose, and without principle of conduct
> In flickering intervals of light and darkness . . .
>
> (FR, p. 294)

and expresses his yearning to escape being alone "In an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts." Later, in his conversation with Mary, he confesses his despair over his inability to escape:

> It seems I shall get rid of nothing.
> Of none of the shadows that I wanted to escape.
>
> (FR, p. 306)

Harry's strife with shadows seems very real to him; nevertheless, as Mary points out, "it may be a deception." (FR, p. 307) Harry admits that what he sees may be a "dream." He is tormented, however, by the thought that there is no other reality but this nightmare: "if there is nothing else / The most real is what I fear." (FR, p. 308) Mary shows him though that he brings his own "landscape" with him, a landscape which is no more real than the other landscape in which his mother, aunts and uncles are toiling. She tries to make him see that his contending with shadows is all imaginary and that he is a victim of self-deception:

> Even if, as you say, Wishwood is a cheat,
> Your family a delusion - then it's all a delusion . . .
> You deceive yourself
> Like the man convinced he is paralysed
> Or like the man who believes that he is blind
> While he still sees the sunlight.
>
> (FR, p. 309)

Harry is, in fact, in the same position as a person who sees a coil of rope and deludes himself into believing that it is a serpent. He is still subject to the power of maya. Gradually, Harry comes to realize the insubstantiality of the world of appearances. He begins to question the reality of those around him:

> Nothing can have happened
> To either of my brothers. Nothing can happen -

If Sergeant Winchell is real. But Denman saw him.
But what if Denman saw him, and yet he was not real?

(*FR*, p. 321)

Very soon, the change in his perception becomes apparent to him; he knows that this sets him apart from his mother, aunts and uncles:

They don't understand what it is to be awake,
To be living on several planes at once
Though one cannot speak with several voices at once.

(*FR*, p. 324)

He can no longer talk the "language" of the others, for he has woken up from his sleep of ignorance and sees much farther than they do. He begins to discriminate between the real and the unreal and to become detached from the transient phenomena in the 'normal' world of appearances:

What you call the normal
Is merely the unreal and the unimportant.

(*FR*, p. 326)

As his perception deepens, he comes to realize that *maya* has entangled him in a web of unreality:

Now I see
I have been wounded in a war of phantoms,
Not by human beings - they have no more power than I.
The things I thought real were shadows, and the real
Are what I thought were private shadows.

(*FR*, p. 334)

No longer do the Furies, who have been hounding him, have the power to frighten him. Those apparitions were a symptom of his inner darkness, which caused him to see shadows where none really existed. As he emerges into the light of reality, the Furies are transformed into "the bright angels," whom he elects to follow in pursuit of liberation from the "burning wheel." (*FR*, p. 339)

Edward and Lavinia, Peter and Celia, in The Cocktail Party, are under the power of their private delusions at the start. Without being in love with Celia, Edward has indulged á la Prufrock in a kind of mermaid dream about her and has willed their relationship, in order to satisfy his selfish desires. Lavinia's fancy of being loved by Peter is the converse of her husband Edward's fancy of loving Celia. Celia, in her turn, discovers that she has only been in love with an ideal, projected out of her own imagination and superimposed on Edward. After Celia's death, Lavinia reveals to Peter that what he has been living on is an "image" of Celia, which he made himself in order to meet his own needs. One and all, they are deluded and dwell amidst unrealities; they all come to realize this fact in their own different ways. But, Edward and Celia best express the feeling of helpless bewilderment and the longing to escape which result when one is confined to a world of one's own making:

EDWARD: There was a door
And I could not open it. I could not touch the handle.
Why could I not walk out of my prison?
What is hell? Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections.

(CP, p. 397)

CELIA: I don't hear any voices, I have no delusions -
Except that the world I live in seems all a delusion!
. . .
Then one is alone, and if one is alone
Then lover and beloved are equally unreal
And the dreamer is no more real than his dreams.

(CP, p. 416)

Both Edward and Celia sense that "one is always alone," (CP, p. 397) and that one's thoughts and feelings all fall within "a circle closed on the outside," constituting a private world of appearances. (WL, p. 80)

Edward, Lavinia and Celia approach Sir Henry for relief from their suffering (presumably, Peter will follow in their footsteps). Sir Henry is quick to recognize their common malaise, but prescibes a different 'cure' to each one of them to suit their individual needs. For, obviously they are in different stages of spiritual evolution. He advises Edward and Lavinia to accept the past and to perceive what they have in common - a sense of "isolation" - which furnishes a bond to hold them together, while they are still in "a state of unenlightenment." (CP, p. 410) They must make "the best of a bad job." Sir Henry's remedy for Celia's sickness is much more radical, for she is ready to sacrifice her self and accept martyrdom in patience and humility like Becket. So, Sir Henry sends her to the "sanatorium," where only saints go, and Celia consents to "journey blind" towards the still point. (CP, p. 418) Her life of self-abnegation "by which the human is / Transhumanized" contrasts with the non-mystical life of average people like Edward and Lavinia. Celia's way is that of the contemplative mystic (or the sannyasin), who has renounced all desires for the love of God; the other way, which Edward and Lavinia follow, is that of the dutiful householder (or the grihastha), who consecrates all his actions to God. Both are ways of redemption; both are ways out of darkness through darkness, for "Only through time is time conquered." (BN, p. 173) Hence, Sir Henry comments:

> Each way means loneliness - and communion.
> Both ways avoid the final desolation
> Of solitude in the phantasmal world
> Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires.
>
> (CP, p. 419)

Hence, Sir Henry's parting words to Edward, Lavinia and Celia are the same - "Work out your salvation with diligence." (CP, p. 411, p. 420)

This death-bed exhortation of the Buddha to his disciples fits all those who strive to be free of the net of maya.

None of the characters in The Confidential Clerk is a martyr or a saint. None is an artistic genius; even Colby who seems distinct from the others has only a second-rate talent. None cures the ills of the mortal condition by recipe. The characters are all ordinary men and women, who insist on their own diagnoses and make up their own prescriptions; yet, by the end, they all gain a measure of self-knowledge, though the deepest insight belongs to Colby. His self-education begins in the first serious conversation he has with his father. Initiated by Sir Claude's observation that his wife "has always lived in a world of make-believe," the talk soon strikes a profounder note, when Colby expresses his doubt of such a pretense:

> It doesn't seem quite honest
> If we all have to live in a world of make-believe,
> Is that good for one?

(CC, p. 462)

Then, Sir Claude reveals to Colby that he had relinquished his youthful dreams of becoming a potter, prompted by pressure from his father and by his own doubts, and become a financier. He had gradually become reconciled to his substitute life as a businessman, which

> begins as a kind of make-believe
> And the make-believing makes it real.

(CC, p. 464)

Nevertheless, he continued to cherish his potter's creations, and periodically retreated to his private room, holding his china and porcelain. It was his escape into "the real world." But it is obvious that the "pure" world of art into which Sir Claude escapes from time to time is as much a make-believe as the "sordid" world of business. He lives in "two worlds - each a kind of make-believe." (CC, p. 466) Like his wife, therefore, Sir Claude is prey to "delusions," (CC, p.462) caught in the web of maya. Colby can empathize with his father, since he too has relinquished his ideal of becoming a musician, a great organist, by taking up the post of a confidential clerk under his father. But he rebels against his father's fatalistic acceptance of life's terms in the fond hope that "make-believing makes it real." (CC, p. 464) He refuses to be content with less than the wholly real. He too has a "secret garden," an inner world into which he occasionally retires, but he cannot accept what his half-sister, Lucasta, tells him:

> . . . it's only the outer world that you've lost;
> You've still got your inner world - a world that's more real.
>
> (CC, p. 472)

To Colby, it is only a part-time consolation. He wants a "garden" as real as the literal one in Joshua Park, from which Eggerson, his predecessor in Sir Claude's service, not only gains a creative joy but also "marrows, or beetroots, or peas" for his wife. To a man of Colby's sensibility, no reality is acceptable that does not integrate the ideal or spiritual with the actual or practical. He knows that both his outer world and his secret garden are insubstantial:

> . . . my garden's no less unreal to me
> Than the world outside it. If you have two lives
> Which have nothing whatever to do with each other -
> Well, they're both unreal.
>
> (CC, p. 473-474)

Moreover, he is alone in his garden; he longs that God would walk in his garden, as "that would make the world outside it real." (CC, p. 474) Mere ecstasy, aesthetic or spiritual, is not enough for Colby; it must be expressed through practical action and, more important, it must be shared, with man or God. Clearly, Colby yearns to break out of the closed circle of his self, the private world of make-believe, and be free of maya, separating him from reality. At the end, he manages to take his first step in this direction by opting to be a church organist instead of a confidential clerk.

In The Cocktail Party, after Sir Harcourt-Reilly has appropriately guided his 'patients' onto their respective paths, his confidante Julia comments:

> All we could do was to give them the chance.
> And now, when they are stripped naked to their souls
> And can choose, whether to put on their proper costumes
> Or huddle quickly into new disguises . . . .
>
> (CP, p. 421)

Lord Claverton, in The Elder Statesman, is also given a chance by the sheer force of circumstances to re-form his life. He is quick to seize the opportunity and, though it entails considerable pain, strips himself naked to his soul before his daughter and her fiancé and chooses rightly to put on the proper costume. He is a lonely man, ill and prematurely aging at the start. On his retirement from public affairs, he finds himself "Contemplating nothingness." (ES, p. 529) All that he has done so far in life does not seem to amount to much and he is left with the "fear of emptiness" before him. (ES, p. 529-530) Then, he is suddenly confronted by two persons, whom he had known in his past life, and they accuse him of having adversely affected their lives by acts of commission and omission. Forced to come to terms with his unsavoury past, he finally recognizes that "they are not real" and that they are "merely ghosts," who have always been with him, tormenting his conscience. (ES, p. 569) With this recognition, he sees himself emerging from his "spectral existence" into something like "reality." (ES, p. 569)

When he has exorcised the uneasy ghosts of his own past, which have usurped his reality, his visitors are reduced to mere human beings who can no longer harm him. He confesses to his daughter and her *fiancé* and receives a kind of absolution at his daughter's hands. He gives up dominating and exploiting others for his own needs and dares to be "the man he really is." This marks the death of his unreal self, that which "pretends to be someone." (*ES*, p. 582) In other words, he has done battle with the accusing phantoms of his shadow self and thus loosened the grip of *maya* over his existence. At the end, therefore, he is "brushed by the wing of happiness," (*ES*, p. 581) a sign that he is well on his way to freedom.

No doubt, the characters and episodes in Eliot's plays differ from each other. Yet, their chief stress is on the deceptiveness of man's temporal existence and the necessity of living under the aspect of eternity. Man, as a rule, dwells amidst appearances, deludes himself into taking the unreal for real and the real for unreal. Consequently, he finds himself enslaved by shifting desires and becomes bound to the turning wheel, which involves him in endless suffering; he is reduced to shadow-boxing with reality. The treachery, so to speak, of secular hopes and desires, which enmesh man ever more firmly in the web of *maya* or world-appearance, is thus Eliot's great dramatic theme.

The majority of mankind continue to be subject to *maya*, except for those odd and infrequent moments when they have a brief and tantalizing glimpse of the reality beyond all appearances. A few intrepid souls, however, do achieve a break-through and find repose in the still point. What are the stages in their quest? And what exactly is the nature of their experiences? By piecing together the scattered hints in Eliot's poetry and drama, we might arrive at certain tentative answers to these difficult questions.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

[1] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 59.

[2] W.Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Bedford: Gordon Fraser, 1967), p. 108.

[3] Grover Smith, *T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 14.

[4] *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, ed. Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter, 2nd ed. (N.Y.: W.W.Norton and Co. Inc., 1977), p. 730.

[5] Grover Smith, *T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, p. 107.

[6] *The Upanishads*, tr. by Juan Mascaro (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), pp. 91-92.

[7] *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (N.Y.: New American Library, 1954), p. 80.

[8] *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, tr. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (Hollywood, California: Vedanta Press, 1953), pp. 14-15.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[10] Staffan Bergsten, *Time and Eternity: A Study in the Structure and Symbolism of T.S.Eliot's* Four Quartets (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1960), p. 101.

[11] F.H.Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London: Sonnenschein, 1893), p. 9.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 432.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 453.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[15] A quite convincing case may be made out for seeing even Prufrock as foreshadowing the appearance of Tiresias in Eliot's poetry. Prufrock compares himself to "Lazarus . . . come back from the dead" (LP, p. 16) and, at one point in his agitated reverie, declares that he should have been a crab; later, he claims to have seen his own "head . . . brought in upon a platter." (LP, p. 15) It would seem, therefore, that Prufrock like Tiresias experiences several lives simultaneously.

[16] T.S.Eliot, *The Waste Land*, a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts including the annotations of Ezra Pound, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 3.

[17] *The Teachings of Bhagvan Sri Ramana Maharishi*, ed. by Arthur Osborne (London, Rider, 1962), p. 10.

[18] Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism* (Middlesex, Penguin, 1948), p. Eliot refers us in his notes (*WL*, p. 79) to a quotation from Hermann Hesse's *Blick ins Chaos*, describing a similar phenomenon: " . . . Ueber diese Lieder lacht der Bürger beleidigt, der Heilige und Seher hört sie mit Tränen." Hesse was deeply influenced by Indian philosophy; he was especially captivated by Buddhism. He embodied certain basic Indian philosophical themes in his book *Siddhartha*. Siddhartha was the original name of the Buddha, before he became enlightened. In Hesse's book, the name belongs to the protagonist who encounters the Buddha.

[19] Cf. *Aphorisms of Yoga by Bhagwan Shree Patanjali*, done into English from the original in Sanskrit with a commentary by Shree Purohit Swami and an introduction by W.B.Yeats (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 62:

> The forces of attachment and detachment simultaneously work on the mind, a constant fight goes on between worldly pleasures and spiritual pleasures; with the help of spiritual pleasures the yogi controls the worldly pleasures, with the help of renunciation he controls the spiritual pleasures, till he attains the seedless Samadhi.

[20] Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," *The Portable Matthew Arnold* (N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 151.

[21] Cf. "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*, p. 195:

> See, now they vanish,
> The faces and the places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
> To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

[22] Cf. "The Dry Salvages, p. 180:

> So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

[23] T.S.Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), pp. 189-190.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

CHAPTER 7

THE STILL POINT

"From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality."

- *Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad*

"We might compare time to a constantly revolving sphere; the half that was always sinking would be the past, that which was always rising would be the future; but the indivisible point at the top, where the tangent touches, would be the extensionless present. As the tangent does not revolve with the sphere, neither does the present, the point of contact with the object, the form of which is time, with the subject, which has no form, because it does not belong to the knowable, but is the condition of all that is knowable."

- Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*

"The deeper design," as Eliot writes in his Introduction to Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, "may be that of human misery and bondage which is universal."[1] But, the sensitive and discriminating individual can still penetrate "the bold imposing façade" (EC, p. 180) of *maya*, liberate himself from the wheel of *samsara*, be free of craving, compulsive action and suffering, and find *shanti* or peace that passes understanding.[2] That such a state exists in the midst of universal suffering and that this resting place in the midst of flux can be attained by the individual is the overwhelming paradox of the great religions of the world.[3] Thus, Krishna asserts that

> the man of pure vision without pride or delusion, in liberty from the chain of attachment, with his soul ever in his Inner Spirit, all selfish desires gone, and free from the two contraries of pleasure and pain, goes to the abode of eternity.[4]

And the Buddha speaks to his disciples of *Nirvana* or freedom *tout court* from the universal bondage in uncompromising terms:

> Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of

> infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither consciousness-nor-unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon-and-sun. Thence, monks, I declare there is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life); therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not on, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of Ill.[5]

Christ too affirms that the individual can find refuge from the woes of the world in the eternal being of God.

The poems published before The Waste Land focus on the cyclic purposelessness of existence in the phenomenal world and there seems to be little or no hope of escape from the enchainment of the wheel. Even Gerontion, who is disenchanted with the "contrived corridors" of history (G, p. 38) and speaks of Christ the tiger and of the "word within a word," (G, p. 37) is incapable of striking out for the still centre of the wheel. Only once is there the barest hint of yearning for a life beyond the senses, and even that emanates from a non-human entity; the personified street in the fourth poem of "Preludes," trampled by insistent feet and weary of its own transitory show of fingers, pipes and eyes, is

> moved by fancies that are curled
> Around these images, and cling:
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
> Infinitely suffering thing.
>
> (P, p. 23)

A Christ or a Buddha seems about to materialize as the poem trembles on the brink of a profound compassion for all suffering beings. But this moment of self-transcendence is short-lived and is succeeded by cynical indifference.

Our first impression of The Waste Land is that it has a vaster canvas than its predecessors and that the scenes and actors depicted are much more complex than any we have so far encountered. The earlier poems focus on particular situations and they indicate the general human predicament. Our attention is usually captured by one person - Prufrock, Sweeney, Grishkin or Gerontion - and we see facets of our own personality mirrored in them. The Waste Land, on the other hand, multiplies "variety / In a wilderness of mirrors," (G, p. 38) to borrow a phrase from "Gerontion." Our interest is claimed by a host of incidents, which take place simultaneously in the ancient or the modern world. Historical fact and literary fiction reside cheek by jowl. The characters coalesce and fuse, or disintegrate and vanish, in dreamlike manner, with the nonchalant ease and unpredictability of the multitudinous gods of the Hindu pantheon; they are no-one and everyone at once. The Waste Land, in fact, has no specific location in space and time; it harbours all beings of all worlds in all ages, who labour under the "universal bondage" (FR, p. 301) and long, even though only for a moment, to be free.

The visionary narrator, Tiresias, experiences such a moment of freedom, which he cannot find words to describe, in the hyacinth garden:

> I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

(WL, p. 40)

It is a momentary glimpse of Enlightenment, in and out of time. The hyacinth girl is, so to speak, a catalyst stimulating a harmonious reaction between the narrator and his environment, so that he gains a sudden momentary insight into the centrality of being, where the spokes of the turning wheel converge. When he tries to recapture the experience in words, however, he finds himself quite unequal to the task; he can only indicate it negatively: he could *not* speak or see, he was *neither* living *nor* dead and he knew *nothing* and yet he apprehends "the heart of light, the silence." The negative and paradoxical mode of expressing the nature of *nirvana* is quite common to both Vedanta and Buddhism. Thus, we hear Yagnavalkya in *Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad*:

> That of which they say that it is above the heavens, beneath the earth, embracing heaven and earth, past, present and future, that is woven, warp and woof, in the ether . . . It is *neither* coarse *nor* fine, *neither* short *nor* long, *neither* red (like fire) *nor* fluid (like water); it is *without* shadow, *without* darkness, *without* air, *without* ether, *without* attachment, *without* taste, *without* smell . . . [6]

And the Buddha refuses to limit the nature of freedom by defining it too precisely:

> There is, monks, an *un*born, *not* become, *not* made, *un*compounded, and were it not, monks, for this *un*born, *not* become, *not* made, *un*compounded, no escape could be shown here for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded. But because there is, monks, an *un*born, *not* become, *not* made, *un*compounded, therefore an escape can be shown for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded.[7]

The lama in *Kim* too finds on attaining Enlightenment that he cannot pinpoint the experience:

> Then my Soul was all alone, and I saw *nothing*, for I was all things, having reached the Great Soul. And I meditated a thousand thousand years, *passionless*, well aware of the Causes of all Things.[8]

Perhaps, the best explanation of this negative and paradoxical mode of expressing the nature of *nirvana* is found in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*:

> . . . the conception of nothing is essentially relative, and always refers to a definite something which it negatives . . . Every nothing is thought of as such only in relation to something, and presupposes this relation, and thus also this something.[9]

Eliot was well aware of the "subtleties" of the Indian philosophers,[10] directly from his reading of Sanskrit philosophy and literature, and indirectly through the eyes of Western authors such as Kipling, Edwin Arnold and Schopenhauer. Not surprisingly, therefore, he adapted the Oriental attitude to his own purpose of poetic evocation.

The evocation brings out at least three points clearly. The illumination is to be attained in this life itself and not in some world beyond death - the Kingdom of Heaven is within and at hand. It is a condition that transcends the sense, bestows peace that passes understanding, and spells freedom from suffering and action. It is, paradoxically, both momentary and unforgettable, temporal and eternal - a present where past and future are gathered and opposites are reconciled.

It is an experience to be thought over and modified, amplified and enriched, to be sounded again and again in Eliot's poetry. In The Waste Land, it is recalled vividly by the visionary narrator, Tiresias, in the last section, as a surrender of the individual self or ego to the overwhelming reality of the noumenon or that which is:

> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never retract
> By this, and this only, we have existed . . .
>
> (WL, p. 74)

It is not to be found in our "obituaries," or in "memories" or "under seals," because it is not limited by space, time or causation; the experience is indefinable, known only by its fruits in our daily lives.

The central paradox of The Waste Land, then, is that man, who is involved in the domain of maya, enchained to the wheel, can still emancipate himself from constant becoming and be one with the eternal being. Man is intimately related, in other words, to both time and eternity. This is why The Waste Land is full of references to temporal and eternal values: to mention the most obvious, we have the London crowds flowing down King William Street to "where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours / With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine;" (WL, p. 62) we see the gossipy Cockney women being asked by the pub-owner to "Hurry up please its time" (WL, p. 66) - time for what? to leave the pub? or, to prepare for eternity by working out their salvation with diligence? - and we hear Tiresias' ghastly parody of Marvell:

> But at my back from time to time I hear
> The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
> Sweeney to Mrs.Porter in the spring.
>
> (WL, p. 67)

But, man's relationship to time and eternity is not understood by most of us. Like the apostles on the way to Emmaus, we may not even be conscious of the nearness of Christ:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> - But who is that on the other side of you?
>
> (WL, p. 73)

Consequently, we lead a harrowing, anxiety-filled existence most of our lives:

> 'What shall I do now? What shall I do?
> 'I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
> 'With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
> 'What shall we ever do?'
>
> (WL, p. 65)

This bleak, horrifying mode of time-conditioned existence is, however, not quite hopeless; for, it is possible for us to break through, break in and find something like the Kingdom of Heaven waiting there. The moments in the hyacinth garden do occur and hold exquisite promise.

The apprehension of the moment of peace occurs suddenly in the hyacinth garden; later, it is even spoken of as self-surrender. It is, therefore, a gift; in Christian terms, it is grace. And yet, individual effort is necessary to draw near to this moment; the entire action of the poem is _seen_ and pondered by the blind Tiresias, so that his consciousness is gradually purified. He comes to understand that craving (_tanha_) for the evanescent things of the world binds him down to the phenomenal world and causes him endless misery.

The practical means of rooting out craving and eliminating suffering are drawn from the _Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad_: _datta_, _dayadhvam_ and _damyata_. (_WL_, p. 74) Literally translated, these words counsel one to give, sympathize and control; they also have the larger implication that one should practise self-surrender, compassion and self-control. Only by giving up the ego, may we hope to attain _nirvana_ and fruitfully serve our fellow-beings. Only by broadening our sympathy into a universal compassion for our fellow-creatures imprisoned again and again in their earthly lives, can we grow in awareness. Only by controlling our present lives, like an expert sailor at sea, can we "at least set (our) lands in order." (_WL_, p. 74) These lessons, imparted by the crashing chords of thunder, lend an optimistic note to the "fragments" which Tiresias, seeker of reality, shores up against the ruins of former lives. The poem concludes, therefore, by reiterating the instructions received from the thunder and intoning the formal ending of the _Upanishads_: Shanti Shanti Shanti (_WL_, p. 75) - a fitting reminder that, in the ultimate analysis, peace that passes understanding will prevail.

Taken as a whole, _The Waste Land_ may be said to trace the journey of the human soul across the desert of ignorance, full of thirst (_tanha_) and suffering (_dukkha_) to a vantage-point wherefrom the freedom of *nirvana* is at least tantalizingly glimpsed, if not fully realized. Thus, the pervasive images of sterility and futility in the poem serve to stress the dark night of the soul in its emptiness due to separation from God, while the positive moments point to detachment from craving as a means to emancipation. All opposites and contraries are reconciled in the exquisite moment in the hyacinth garden, the memory of which enables the seeker to go on surviving.

There are certain oblique references to the blissful experience of freedom from the universal bondage in the poems that Eliot wrote in the interim between *The Waste Land* and the *Four Quartets*.

The empty effigies in *The Hollow Men* are immobilised in a static despair; subject to selfish desires and deluded by appearances, they not only do not apprehend reality but also avoid working toward it. The evasiveness of the hollow men is emphatically brought home to us by the image of the "eyes" they "dare not meet in dreams." (*HM*, p. 83) It is not clear whose eyes these are, but they represent a challenge to the human spirit; hence, the refusal of the hollow men to meet them indicates their spiritual bankruptcy. The fact that the hollow men shrink from

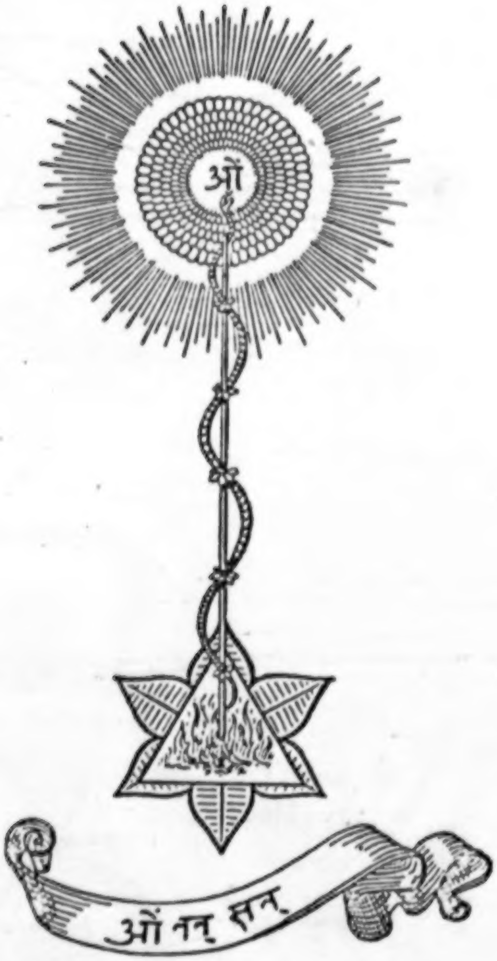
> that final meeting
> In the twilight kingdom
>
> (*HM*, p. 84)

suggests that the eyes may be those of a saviour like Christ. These eyes, which the hollow men avoid meeting are, ironically enough, their only hope of release from suffering. Unless the eyes reappear

> As the perpetual star
> Multifoliate rose
> Of death's twilight kingdom
>
> (*HM*, p. 85)

the hollow men are doomed to remain "Sightless," bereft of any hope of salvation. "The perpetual star" seems to be associated with the Star of Bethlehem, which led the Magi to the infant Christ, while the "Multifoliate rose" seems to be linked with Dante's image of the saints in Paradise, clustered together like the petals of a white rose. When Dante steeps his eyes in the river of light and looks at the celestial rose, he sees the eyes of the myriad Christian saints reflecting the glory of God, so that the rose assumes the appearance of a vast shining circle. This is the image Eliot seems to be evoking, according to Audrey F. Cahill, when he equates the eyes, the star and the rose.[11] Together they symbolize the reality of God, whose absence is keenly felt by the hollow men in their cactus land. Sunk in inertia, however, they decline to strive toward this reality and choose to prolong their spiritual distress. In short, the blissful experience of freedom from the universal bondage is one which the hollow men do not care to attain.

The single rose is essentially "a symbol of completion, of consummate achievement and perfection" and figures prominently in Western mystical literature as an image of unity.[12] Dante, in particular, makes the "white rose" represent the fulfilment of his quest for the eternal being of God. Eliot is obviously following the footsteps of the master, when he uses the "Multifoliate rose" as a symbol of the reality behind all appearances. Now, the "Multifoliate rose" as a symbol of the reality beyond appearances is the Western equivalent to "the thousand-petalled lotus" (sahasrara) of Eastern mysticism.[13] Tantrism, an esoteric branch of Yoga, symbolizes the spiritual current in man as a serpent coiled up at the base of the spinal cord. When the Yogi (one who seeks to yoke or unite himself with the divine essence) advances



A Symbolic Representation of the Kundalini Rising
through the Different Centres in the Sushumnā
to the Thousand-petalled Lotus in the Brain

Vivekananda: The Yogas and Other Works (N.Y.: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), facing page 595.

spiritually, the current gradually uncoils and rises upwards, enfranchising a series of lotuses or spiritual centres in the body. The powers and perceptions of the Yogi increase as the current travels from centre to centre and when the current culminates in the sahasrara or the thousand-petalled lotus in the brain or the crown of the head, the Yogi attains Enlightenment or is one with the reality behind all appearances.[14] Has Eliot then attempted an East-West ideo-synthesis of symbols? Has he fused together Dante's "white rose" (candida rosa) and Tantrism's "thousand-petalled lotus" (sahasrara) to create a particularly arresting symbol in the "Multifoliate rose?" Quite probable, especially since he uses the Oriental and Occidental symbols of the ultimate reality simultaneously in "Burnt Norton" to indicate a momentary experience of Enlightenment: the lotus blooms in the rose-garden.

The protagonist of Ash Wednesday is caught in "the time of tension between dying and birth," struggling to detach himself from the temptations of the phenomenal world and to unite himself with the changeless reality of the noumenon. He knows from the start what Tiresias does not learn until the end of his reverie and what the hollow men never learn at all: only by giving up his egotistic craving for the evanescent things of this world and cultivating the capacity "to care and not to care," (AW, p. 98) can he attain the ultimate reality and experience the peace that passes understanding. Hence, he has an intuitive apprehension of the apprent contradiction between the phenomenal world and the noumenon, or between appearance and reality:

> Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
> The Word without a word, the Word within
> The world and for the world;
> And the light shone in darkness and

Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.

(AW, p. 96)

Apparently, the movement of the world is in opposition to the Word; the world does not even hearken to the Word and even crucifies the Word made flesh, as in the person of Christ. Yet, paradoxically, the world cannot exist apart from the Word, for the Word is within "The world and for the world." In other words, the Word is central to all activity and all existence - an intuition most precisely expressed by the image of the "unstilled world" revolving around the "still" and "silent Word." Significantly, the protagonist of Ash Wednesday resembles Tiresias when he tries to convey his insight into the nature of reality. He too perceives that the Word shines as light amidst darkness. He too has recourse to a negative and pardoxical mode of expression: the Word is "unspoken" and "unheard," "still" and "silent;" yet it is the hub of all activity in the world.

The experience of a supra-temporal reality, negatively implied in the reverie of The Waste Land and tersely indicated in the penitential soul-searching of Ash Wednesday, becomes central to the Four Quartets. The intimations of time and eternity, which have so far been churning in a rather vague and uncertain manner in the poetic consciousness, now congeal and become crystal-clear. The dynamic contrast that prevails between the temporal world of constant Becoming and the eternal world of Being is illustrated through striking imagery:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh
nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor
towards,

> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point,
> the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(BN, p. 173)

Eliot's negative and paradoxical mode of expressing the nature of the timeless reality finds here its fullest flowering. It has already been pointed out that this attitude is quite common to both Vedanta and Buddhism and that Eliot probably adapted it to suit his own needs. It cannot be claimed that he has added essentially to the Vedantic or the Buddhistic description of the ultimate Enlightenment. But he *does* articulate in moving words the psychological aspects of an experience which the individual may attain through whatever means lie closest to his hand (through Patanjali's Yoga or the Noble Eight-fold Path of the Buddha or the Adoration of the Madonna) - the experience of the still point:

> I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
> And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
> The inner freedom from the practical desire,
> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And outer compulsion, yet surrounded
> By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
> *Erhebung* without motion, concentration
> Without elimination, both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood
> In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
> The resolution of its partial horror.

(BN, p. 173)

This evocation illuminates at least three aspects of the experiential reality clearly: the "still point" is a state to be attained in this life itself, for ultimately, there is only the dance itself, and only through time is time conquered; it is a condition of peace that passes understanding and spells freedom from desire, action and suffering; it is paradoxically both temporal and eternal, in time and out of time - a present, where past and future are gathered. These three closely interwoven motifs are sounded again and again in the Four Quartets, to be thought over, amplified and enriched. The fact that Eliot explores their Oriental "subtleties" in such rich detail, without ever sacrificing his fundamental Christian framework, speaks volumes for his poetic power of reconciliation and amalgamation.

The central emphasis of Krishna and Buddha is that nirvana can be achieved here and now, in this very life, through renunciation of all selfish craving, the root cause of suffering, and through the compassionate service to one's fellow-beings in the world. Then the darkness of ignorance is destroyed, the veil of maya or the phenomenal world of appearances is rent, and the timeless reality is realized in one's own being - a process described by Eliot with great depth and intensity of feeling:

> I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
> Which shall be the darkness of God . . .
> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
> For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
> For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
> But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
> Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
> So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.
>
> (EC, p. 150)

"The darkness of God" which annihilates the darkness of individuality and ignorance is a familiar symbol to St.John of the Cross. Krishna uses it in the Gita in speaking of the Gnani or the Enlightened One:

> In the dark night of all being awakes to Light the tranquil man. But what is day to other beings is night for the sage who sees.[15]

The Gnani, according to Krishna, may even regard Brahman or the ultimate reality as the great mayavin, the Supreme Poet who conjures up the vast drama of the universe and yet remains unaffected by it as a mere

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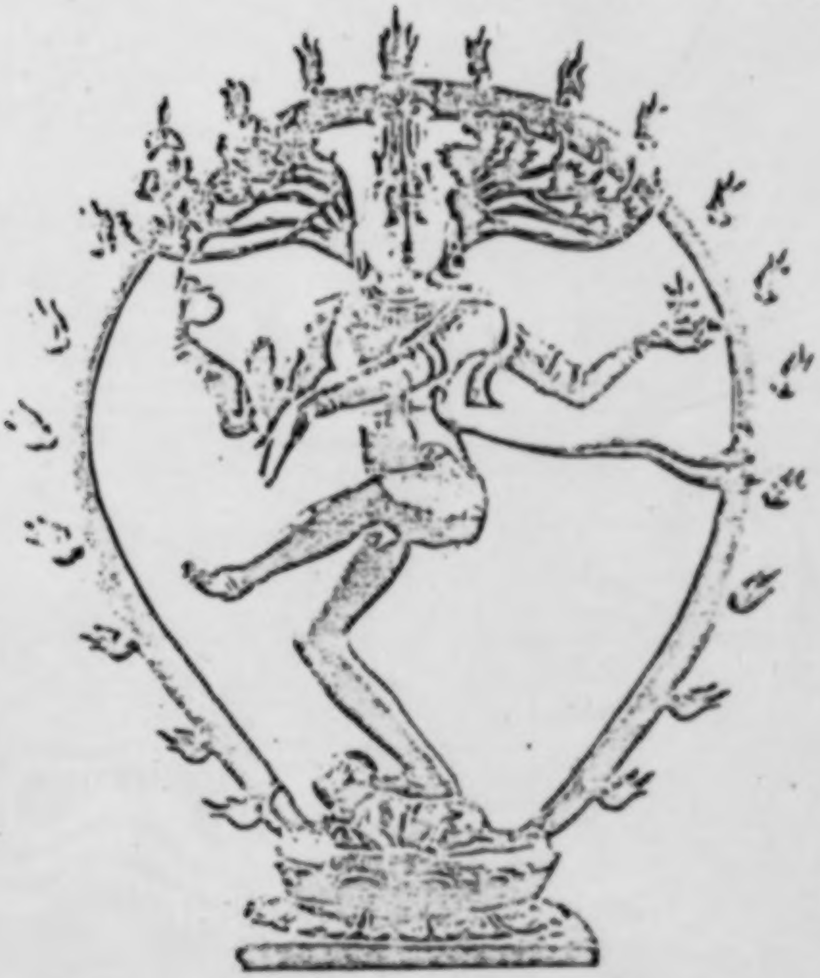


Dancing Śiva (*Naṭarāja*). Bronze. Cōḷa. *c.* 11th century

A.L.Basham, The Wonder That Was India (N.Y.: Grove Press Inc., 1959), facing page 329.

PLATE LXVI

witness, knowing that the scene, the audience and the very act of seeing are all contained in his own Being. By an extension of this profound symbol, the universe may be regarded as lila or Divine Play, culminating in the Dance of Siva in Hindu metaphysics:

> The essential significance of Siva's dance is threefold: first, it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the source of all movement within the Cosmos, which is represented by the Arch; secondly, the purpose of his Dance is to release the countless souls of men in the snare of Illusion; thirdly, the place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe, is in the Heart.[16]

Siva, then, represents the noumenon, the centrality of Being, which sustains the phenomenal world of constant Becoming. He is the still point, without which there would be no dance. When one has merged one's individuality with the divine essence and is at the still point, one attains a condition of timelessness and glimpses an instant of eternity. All warring opposites resolve themselves into a harmonious pattern, "and there is only the dance." In other words, the ultimate reality of God alone exists within and without the individual; the still point and the dance are indistinguishable from each other, for "the darkness shall be light and the stillness the dancing." The Dance of Siva, it may be added, is also mimed by the worshippers of Siva in a ritual dance, with the aim of liberating the individual soul from the shackles of maya into union with God. Such a union, presumably, is the end toward which the rustics in "East Coker" are unconsciously moving, by dancing round and round their country bonfire. Not only does their "daunsinge" signify "matrimonie," (EC, 178) but it also tells of the concord of men and women, who, by ordering their lives in obedience to natural rhythms, find themselves in harmony with the entire universe. In fact, all human beings, including the poet, "must move in measure like a dancer," (LG, p. 195) must consciously participate in the dance of life, with a joyous abandon akin to that of the worshippers of Siva or the rustics in "East Coker," if they are to be at one with God.

The limitations of human language are obvious when it comes to describing either the "still point" or the "dance," since the condition they hint at belongs to the eternal sphere, while the words employed belong to the temporal world:

> Words move, music moves
> Only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence . . . Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay still.

(BN, p. 175)

For, the tension is both fundamental and profound, between Time and Eternity, the Phenomena and the Noumenon, the Relative and the Absolute. And the central paradox is that man, who is involved in the domain of maya, the phenomenal world of time and circumstance, can still emancipate himself from constant Becoming and be one with the eternal Being. Man is intimately related, in other words, to both time and eternity, and it becomes psychologically necessary to posit a point of intersection of the timeless with time.

The very opening of "Burnt Norton" testifies to Eliot's preoccupation with time and eternity. "East Coker" concludes with the admonition that we must not give up our "raid on the inarticulate" (EC, p. 182) and cease from the exploration of our interior landscape:

> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion

(EC, p. 183)

This deeper exploration and communion with reality amidst the flux of existence is the chief concern of "The Dry Salvages" and it leads to the truth of incarnation, to the apprehension of the point of intersection of the timeless with time.

The opening movement of "The Dry Salvages" starts with the river within us and ends in the sea all about us. Our psychical inheritance of racial experience, or what Jung calls our 'collective unconscious,' is likened at the outset to the flow of water in a river; this river is, in turn, compared to a "strong brown god." (DS, p. 184) The double comparison looks forward to the third movement, in which the godlike teachings of Krishna, urging Arjuna to be strong in life's battle, are pondered. Now, Krishna, in the _Gita_, is an _avatar_, an incarnation of the timeless reality (_Brahman_) in the phenomenal world: he represents "the impossible union" (DS, p. 190) of the timeless with time. He is also a destroyer of illusions: he teaches Arjuna that _Brahman_ is the reality in its universal aspect and that _Atman_ is the reality within ourselves (Cf., Christ's saying, "The Kingdom of God is within you"); that _Atman_ and _Brahman_ are indissolubly united with each other so as to constitute one indivisible reality; that this one indivisible reality appears to be many, manifesting itself in innumerable ways in the phenomenal world of time and circumstance; and that due to this power of _maya_, there is an apparent separation between _Atman_ and _Brahman_. Krishna urges Arjuna, therefore, to surrender to the indwelling Godhead and act without caring for the fruits of action; to be an instrument, in other words, of timeless reality. The river of racial memory, the "strong brown god," mutely attests, then, to the microcosmic reality within us (_Atman_), which is indistinguishable from the macrocosmic reality of the universe (*Brahman*). But this permanent and most enduring truth of the human race is submerged in the practical considerations of the phenomenal world and often forgotten in our mechanized and soul-less urban civilization. Truth, however, cannot be destroyed; it destroys everything else by its mere presence, "watching and waiting" (DS, p. 190) through all the seasons of the time-cycle, from the moment of birth to the moment of death, to claim us for its own.

While the river testifying to the truth of the Atman is within us, the tossing sea of the phenomenal world is all about us, in all its immeasurable flux of beauty and terror. It is an ocean of undiscovered truth inscrutable to the human reason; we cannot perceive the truth of the *Brahman* behind and beyond the ever-changing façade of the phenomenal world. All we have are the "hints" of its manifestations tossed on the "beaches" of recorded history; (DS, p. 190) we have to intuit the truth by means of this flotsam cast on the shores of existence. In short, we have to expand our limited human reason into the realm of intuition to realize that we are inseparable from the elemental life-force. Or, as Krishna puts it in the *Gita*, "the river flows into the sea to become one with the sea."[17]

Out of the mysterious depths of this sea, swells a symphony of voices prophesying eternity and sweeps us on irresistibly to the end of the movement, creating thunderous images of truth reaching into the interior landscape of illusions, hints and half-truths, to overwhelm us. Our individuality is no proof against the sea's elemental life-surge: the egotistic "I" of the opening lines is drowned by the impersonal chorus of the sea, to reappear only when the teachings of Krishna to Arjuna are pondered in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages."

The medley of sea-sounds modulates into the clang of the "tolling bell" (DS, p. 191) which spells death to all our womanly anxieties and fragmentariness on the surface of time and ushers in eternity. The river within us merges with the sea all about us as our human sense of time is transformed into that which is eternal - "time not our time." (DS, p. 191)

Indeed, man's relationship to time and eternity, properly understood, is the key to religious life for Eliot and constitutes the core of the Christian revelation. But to most of us, the understanding has not dawned; we are so caught up in our regrets about what has happened in the past or in our worries about what is going to happen in the future that we are never quite conscious of the present in all its innocence and promise:

> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.
>
> (BN, p. 171)

We "look before and after and pine for what is not," quite unaware of the eternal presence of the blissful reality of God. Consequently, we drag out a maimed and crippled half-existence all our lives:

> Here is a place of disaffection
> Time before and time after
> In a dim light . . .
> Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
> Over the strained time-ridden faces
> Distracted from distraction by distraction
> Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
> Tumid apathy with no concentration
> Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
> That blows before and after time,
> Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
> Time before and time after.
>
> (BN, p. 173)

This bleak, horrifying mode of time-conditioned existence is, however, not quite relieved of hope. For, there are intense, isolated moments for most of us when we obtain a tantalizing glimpse into the region of the eternal:

> For most of us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts.
>
> (DS, p. 190)

It is a deeply intuitive moment, when music is heard with such intensity that there is no longer a person listening and music listened to; there is no "I" opposed to "music," for subject and object have coalesced into one, and there is simply music: "you are the music." Such intense and isolated moments of aesthetic contemplation, when the empirical self or ego is so completely submerged that it no longer seems to exist, are the closest most of us ever get to liberation from the flux of time-bound existence.

At least three such moments seem to be experienced by Eliot himself: the moment in the rose garden, the moment in the arbour where the rain beat, and the moment in the draughty church at smokefall. Of the three, the moment in the rose-garden seems to be most vividly remembered and is movingly evoked at the beginning of "Burnt Norton." Speculating on the nature of time, like St.Augustine in his Confessions, Eliot is arrested by the memory of an earlier moment in his life which he had not fully explored:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden.
>
> (BN, p. 171)

The sharpening recollection of what might have been urges him on to investigate the possibilities of the present moment:

> Other echoes
> Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
> Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
> Round the corner. Through the first gate,
> Into our first world . . .

(BN, p. 171)

Suddenly, the earlier experience is recalled with such intensity that it seems to unfold before his mind's eye, the present and the past moments fusing into each other; time stands still and a momentary rapture is experienced:

> And the bird called, in response to
> The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery
> And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
> Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

(BN, p. 172)

In this ecstatic mood, the poet and the companions of his memory move "in formal pattern" and make their way to the dry concrete pool in the garden, now mysteriously filled with "water out of sunlight" and witness the miraculous blooming of love amidst sterility:

> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light,
> And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.

(BN, p. 172)

The lotus is a peculiarly Oriental symbol which, as we have already seen, is associated with ultimate reality in Hindu-Buddhist thought. _The Tantric Way_, a recent _exposé_ of esoteric yogic practices, throws further light on the significance of this symbol in a language untrammeled by technicalities:

> Potent as it is, in tantric art the lotus is a symbol of the unfolding of the self and expanding consciousness, which cuts through psychic opacity and ultimately raises the aspirant

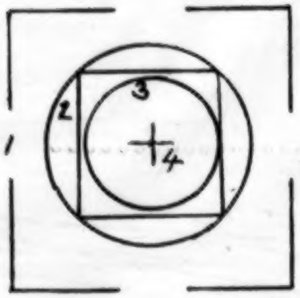
> from the dark depths of ignorance to the radiant heights of inner awakening. Just as lotus plants grow in the 'darkness of mud' and gradually blossom out on the surface of the water, unsullied by the mud and water which nourished them, so the inner self transcends and transforms itself beyond its corporeal limits uncorrupted and untarnished by illusion and ignorance.[18]

And in The Tantric View of Life, which is an account of the tantric practices extant in Tibetan Buddhism, we read this very interesting interpretation of the lotus symbolism:

> Since early times the lotus flower has been a symbol of creativity producing the world of things from its fertile seeds, and of purity, because water does not cling to its leaves. This symbol is used . . . in describing the peak experience of Being which is in this world, but not just this world . . . "a blue or white lotus flower or jasmine, flower can enthrall a person with its lovely colour, its softness and fragrance. That it can do so lies in the fact that it grows in the unclean ponds of villages and hamlets, but is not affected by their uncleanliness. The same holds good for the attitude of the yogi. Even if he thinks of the objects of the outer and inner world, by knowing the real, he is not affected by the mire of the objects and taking the lotus flower without its (surrounding) mire, he understands the absolutely real without its (deflecting) ideas.[19]

Was Eliot aware of the profound significance of the lotus? Most probably. He seems to be conscious of its mystical implications, since he uses the lotus in conjunction with the rose, a symbol denoting the ecstatic vision of the unity of God in Western mysticism.

It is also quite probable that Eliot knew something of Tantra. He speaks of entering the rose-garden through "the first gate" (presumably, there are other gates), of moving into the "box circle" and of looking down into the drained pool; the pool is mysteriously filled with "water out of sunlight" and the "lotos" blooms in the pool. Diagrammatically represented, then, this seems to be the plan of the rose-garden:



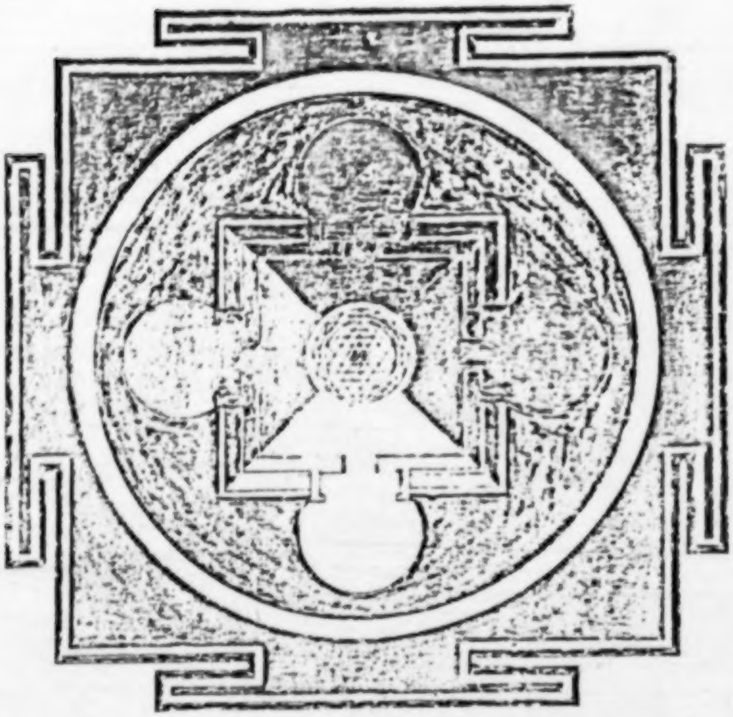
1. "the first gate"
2. "box-circle"
3. pool
4. "lotos"

In tantrism, the mandala, "a composition of complex patterns and diverse iconographic images" is often used as an aid to meditation. A detailed description of the structure of the mandala is given in The Tantric Way:

> The predominant shape is the circle, or concentric circles, enclosing a square, which is sometimes divided into four triangles; this basic composition itself is contained within a square of four gates. Painted in fine brush-strokes between the spaces in hot reds, evanescent emeralds, soft terracottas and pearly whites, are labyrinthine designs, serene and static images of deities in meditative postures or terrific deities spewing out aureoles of smoke and flame . . . all with symbolic meaning. The centre of the mandala projects the cosmic zone; it may be represented by a ring of lotus as the seat of the Vajrasattva, the embodiment of the supreme wisdom, immersed in union with his Sakti in a fathomless ocean of joy.[20]

Obviously, there are a number of remarkable correspondences between Eliot's rose-garden and a mandala. The mandala, moreover, is not a mere geometric pattern; it is full of psychic significance:

> The mandala indicates a focalization of wholeness and is analogous to the cosmos. As a synergic form it reflects the cosmogenic process, the cycles of elements, and harmoniously integrates within itself the opposites, the earthly and the ethereal, the kinetic and the static. The circle also functions as the nuclear motif of the self, a vehicle for centering awareness, disciplining concentration and arousing a state conducive to mystic exaltation . . . The mandala is a psychic complex which conditions the return of the psyche to its potent core. Hence the initiation process is often referred to as a 'march towards the centre' so that the adept can interiorize the mandala in its totality, counterbalance the opposing dimensions projected in its symbolism and finally be reabsorbed in the cosmic space represented symbolically in the inner circle. The process of interiorization



A contemporary ground-plan of a temple based on a maṇḍala. Gouache on paper.

inner circle. Symbolizing the 'eight aspects of disintegrated consciousness', these are what bind the adept to the common run of the world and they must be conquered during one's spiritual pilgrimage. The four portals which open up in the middle of each side of the maṇḍala are usually flanked by awe-inspiring divinities, obstructive forces in the unconscious which must be overcome before realization is sought.

The next stage is usually represented by a girdle of lotus petals, leaves or intertwining floral patterns, symbols of 'spiritual rebirth'. Finally, in the centre, or the 'vimāna', is the seat of the deity or the cosmic zone, the last stage of spiritual integration.

Like all tantric activity, the process of drawing the maṇḍala is an exercise in contemplation, an act of meditation accomplished by following definite aesthetic principles and strict visual formulae. To evoke the universe of the maṇḍala with its wide-ranging symbology accurately, the artist has to practise visual formulation, sometimes beginning from an early age. The image, like a mirror, reflects the inner self which ultimately leads to enlightenment and deliverance. In Tibet, the actualization of this awareness is known

Ajit Mookherjee and Madhu Khanna, The Tantric Way (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 65.

> is a matter of orderly progression, wherein each inner circuit marks a phase in spiritual ascent . . . To evoke the universe of the mandala with its wide-ranging symbology accurately, the artist has to practise visual formulation . . . The image, like a mirror, reflects the inner self which ultimately leads to enlightenment and deliverance. In Tibet, the actualization of this awareness is known as 'liberation through sight.' The act of seeing, which is analogous to contemplation, is in itself a liberating experience.[21]

Is Eliot disciplining the artist in himself by evoking "the psychic complex" of the rose-garden? His poetic self does move "in a formal pattern" (BN, p. 172) along with other unseen presences, enacting a "'march towards the centre'". And the process of interiorization does lead to a momentary apprehension of reality, if not to a total emancipation from a time-bound existence. And this enables the poet to reflect deeply on the nature of man's relationship to time and eternity, on the cyclic process of birth and death in the universe, on suffering and action. In short, by an extension of the symbolism of the rose-garden, the Four Quartets as a whole may be seen to be a mandala, leading the poet as well as his readers towards a progressively greater awareness of unity in diversity.

The appearance of the lotus, then, at the climax of the experience in the rose-garden seems to mark the transition of earthly desire into divine love. The moment of ecstasy, however, is short-lived, and the poet is once again caught up in time,

                                        the form of limitation
Between unbeing and being.

(BN, p. 175)

Like St.Augustine, he is left with the thoughts of childhood and innocence; they are the tokens of his brief visit to the lost Eden of the race.

Such intense and isolated moments, with no before and after, are not to be construed as the still point of the turning world; they are but

> hints and guesses
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
>
> (DS, p. 190)

This five-fold path to emancipation is probably a pale reflection of the Noble Eight-fold path of the Buddha and Eliot is quick to assure us that total emancipation from the wheel of samsara is at best rare and infrequent:

> to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint -
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
>
> (DS, p. 189-190)

From one point of view, then, the still point of peace is the paradoxical intersection (or the impossible union) of the timeless with time; to the Christian mind, it is exemplified in the incarnation of Christ. An apprehension of the point of intersection of the timeless with time can, therefore, be only through Divine Grace, though the Grace has to be deserved first in a "lifetime's death in love, / Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender."

From another point of view, the still point of peace is a condition of freedom from craving and suffering and can be attained through individual effort. This is the Buddhist outlook on life, from which the notion of Grace and the idea of Incarnation are both absent.

Vedanta favours the middle ground between the extremes of Christianity and Buddhism. The Upanishads and the Gita both stress the necessity of individual effort for attaining nirvana. At the same time, they also admit the operation of Divine Grace in human existence. The Gita, moreover, affirms that the timeless Being does manifest itself from time to time in an Incarnation or avatar.

Eliot is strongly attracted to the notion of individual effort as a means to the ultimate Enlightenment. But, at the same time, as a professed Anglo-Catholic, he is unwilling to give up the idea of divine intervention. Thus, he gives us apparently contradictory directions, almost in the same breath; in the third movement of "East Coker," he counsels us to wait without hope or love or faith for the "darkness of God;" and yet in the final section, he affirms that

> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion.
>
> (EC, p. 183)

Eliot seems, therefore, to set human passivity and activity at odds with each other. In Catholic theology, a mysterious reconciliation is effected, where the individual is considered really free only when he acts under grace. The Gita too is unequivocal in declaring that self-surrender and right action ultimately mean the same thing and bring to to union with the eternal. Nowhere in the Four Quartets does Eliot attempt an explicit reconciliation of Divine Grace and individual effort; rather, he leaves it to us to effect an imaginative reconciliation. And it cannot be denied that the poetic appeal of the Four Quartets lies partly at least in this voiceless invitation extended to the readers to participate in the poetic process, and that the poetic power of the Four Quartets derives from the apparently unresolved conflicts in the poetry.

As a Christian, Eliot is convinced of the unique character of the Incarnation of Christ. And yet, in "The Dry Salvages," after dealing with the Annunciation, he introduces ideas and even direct quotations from the Gita, and then goes on to discuss the phenomenon of Incarnation. Krishna in the Gita is an Incarnation of the infinite Being of God, but is only one among many avatars. Thus, the Christian doctrine of the unique Incarnation and the Vedantic notion of repeated avatars seem contradictory. They stand reconciled, however, in Eliot's poetry, for both Krishna and Christ are manifestations of the timeless in time; in them, the "impossible union" of two irreconcilable spheres of existence is made actual:

> Here the past and future
> Are conquered, and reconciled,
> Where action were otherwise movement
> Of that which is only moved
> And has in it no source of movement.
>
> (DS, p. 190)

Significantly enough, Eliot refers only to "Incarnation" in the last movement of "The Dry Salvages" and not to the Incarnation. Krishna and Christ both seem to be included under the generic term. Elsewhere in Eliot's poetry, it is indicated that the Indian thought systems may be regarded as preparatory states to the full Christian revelation, so that Krishna (and even the Buddha) may be said to foreshadow the coming of Christ.[22]

It is possible to reach the still point, which spells freedom from a time-bound existence, by a positive or a negative approach. The via negativa of extreme asceticism that seeks to conquer time by a deliberate severance of all worldly bonds is common to all religions, but has often been discouraged as an extreme measure unfit for the majority of mankind. Eliot too seems to regard it as an escape from the place of disaffection and not as a means to transcend time:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement . . .

(BN, p. 174)

The negative way seems to resemble emptiness to Eliot and his description of it is rather grim. Such total renunciation enables the individual to attain the steadfastness of a rock against the flux and suffering of temporality, so that he can intuit the still point of the turning world.

Contrasted with the negative way of extreme asceticism, there is the positive way of detached action, which Krishna outlines in the Gita and which Eliot reinforces in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages":

At the moment which is not of action or inaction
You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
The mind of man may be intent
At the time of death" - this is the one action
(And the time of death is every moment)
Which shall fructify in the lives of others:
And do not think of the fruit of action.

(DS, p. 188)

It may seem very difficult to act in a spirit of self-surrender renouncing the fruit of action and say like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done," but there can be no doubt that such selfless action is certain to lead to the still point of peace that passes understanding.

Within the phenomenal world of flux and suffering, three modes of existence can be perceived: the life of self-centredness, the life of self-negation and the life of selfless compassion. Eliot sets all three of them forth in the third movement of "Little Gidding," with a sense of completion:

> There are three conditions which often look alike
> Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow;
> Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
> From self and from things and from persons; and growing between them, indifference
> Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
> Being between two lives - unflowering, between
> The live and the dead nettle.
>
> (LG, p. 195)

Eliot seems to envision here the life-negating indifference of extreme asceticism as that which lies between the living and the dead. It grows, but it does not flower; it strives to create, but is impotent; it is, in fact, a living death. Hence, Eliot does not favour it as a means to emancipation; the still point of peace that passes understanding is better attained through detachment than insensibility.

Detachment from self and from things and from persons seems synonymous with the positive Christian virtue of humility. Humility is, in fact, the only wisdom we can hope to acquire and it is endless. It is to surrender oneself so completely to God that one becomes an instrument in His hands, "a symbol perfected in death," casting off all pretensions to knowledge and possessions, content to be led according to His will:

> In order to arrive at what you do not know
>   You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
> In order to possess what you do not possess
>   You must go by way of dispossession.
> In order to arrive at what you are not
>   You must go through the way in which you are not.
> And what you do not know is the only thing you know
> And what you own is what you do not own
> And where you are is where you are not.
>
> (LG, p. 181)

Once again, we are confronted with the language of paradox, for the ultimate reality is non-dual unity and any attempt to describe it or the higher mystical disciplines necessary to attain it takes place in the realm of duality, so that it is bound to involve paradox.

Taken as a whole, an attitude of passionate concern with man's spiritual destiny characterizes Four Quartets. They are, perhaps, the most intensely religious of Eliot's poems, in that they assert "the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life." (LG, p. 195) They may be said to trace the journey of the human soul from the darkness of ignorance to the dawn of wisdom, when the still point is at least half-grasped, if not fully experienced. Thus, "Burnt Norton" and "East Coker" seem to stress the dark night of the soul in its emptiness due to separation from God, while "The Dry Salvages" appears to elaborate on the theme of right action as a means to emancipation. All opposites and contraries seem to be reconciled through the prayerful accents of "Little Gidding," wherein all the activity of history is seen to be a pattern of timeless moments, and all our exploration to lead us only back to our starting point. It seems to be suggested that when knowledge matures and lodges securely in the mind, it becomes wisdom (Gnana) and issues out in right action, which is indistinguishable from selfless devotion to God (Bhakti).

The peace of the still point is securely in Becket's grasp prior to his martyrdom. He indicates this condition of "complete simplicity" (LG, p. 198) to his priests in no uncertain terms:

> I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,
> And I would no longer be denied; all things
> Proceed to a joyful consummation.
>
> (MC, p. 272)

In order to arrive at this condition, he has surrendered himself completely and become a mere instrument in His hands; he dwells on self-surrender in his sermon:

> A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God . . .
> A martyrdom is never a design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God.
>
> (MC, p. 261)

Becket's words are strikingly similar to the words of Krishna in the Gita, when he urges Arjuna to surrender himself to the Divine Will and act without thinking of the fruits of action. The words "the instrument of God," in particular, are exact English equivalents of the Sanskrit term used by Krishna: "Nimittamatran bhava savyasajin . . . " translates as "Be thou the mere instrument, left-handed archer![23] Becket, then, has "only to make perfect (his) will." (MC, p. 271) He is content to be led to whatever end is ordained by God:

> It is not in time that my death shall be known;
> It is out of time that my decision is taken
> If you call that decision
> To which my whole being gives entire consent.
> I give my life
> To the Law of God above the Law of Man.
>
> (MC, p. 274)

Fully aware that his deeds have their source in eternity, he acts in a spirit of detachment, giving up the fruit of action. Consequently, he becomes "a symbol perfected in death." (LG, p. 96) He is also aware of what his martyrdom would mean to his fellow-beings in the turning world. He calms the agitated chorus:

> Peace, and be at peace with your thoughts and visions.
> These things had to come to you and you to accept them,
> This is your share of the eternal burden,
> The perpetual glory. This is one moment,
> But know that another
> Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy
> When the figure of God's purpose is made complete. (MC, p. 271)

The quiet words extend beyond the women of Canterbury to all of us, who toil amidst the flux and suffering in the phenomenal world, but are vouchsafed occasional "hints" and "guesses" about the noumenon. (DS, p. 190) Becket's words are more than an assurance, they are a benediction.

Harry in The Family Reunion receives "hints" from Mary and Agatha about the possibility of redemption from the bondage of the wheel, when he has almost given way to despair. He greets Mary's benign words with joy:

You bring me news
Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,
Sunlight and singing; when I had felt sure
That every corridor led only to another,
Or to a blank wall . . .

(FR, p. 310)

What Mary intimates to Harry, more through her sympathetic attitude than actual words, is a brief glimpse of the rose-garden. This becomes clear a little later, in the conversation between Harry and Agatha. Agatha uses the symbol of the rose-garden to represent the momentary sense of freedom she has experienced from time to time:

I only looked through the little door
When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:
And heard in the distance tiny voices
And then a black raven flew over.
And then I was only my own feet walking
Away, down a concrete corridor
In a dead air.

(FR, p. 334-335)

Harry responds eagerly and recapitulates his own "moment in and out of time," quite naturally resorting to the symbolism of the rose-garden:

I was not there, you were not there, only our phantoms
And what did not happen is as true as what did happen
O my dear, and you walked through the little door
And I ran to meet you in the rose-garden.

(FR, p. 335)

Obviously, the rose-garden represents a world of intuitive experience transcending time. Both Harry and Agatha are conscious of being freed from the prison of their individual selves and of being pierced with "a sudden painful joy." (MC, p. 271) But their moment of freedom is short-lived, for neither of them is fully emancipated from the wheel. Still, they vividly recall the moment and this enables them to continue to work out their salvation with diligence. Harry, particularly, perceives the apparitions pursuing him to be his "bright angels" and gains the strength to follow them in a spirit of self-surrender. (FR, p. 339) He is now whole-heartedly engaged in the "pursuit of liberation." (FR, p. 331)

As a preparatory measure, he gives up his "attachment to self and to things and to persons." (LG, p. 195) He renounces the ties of his family as well as the material possessions of Wishwood and resolves to follow his "bright angels" to

> the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,
> A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,
> The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,
> A care over lives of humble people . . .
>
> (FR, p. 339)

Agatha makes a penetrating comment on his decision to leave hearth and home for a difficult ascetic mode of existence:

> Here the danger, here the death, here, not elsewhere;
> Elsewhere no doubt is agony, renunciation,
> But birth and life. Harry has crossed the frontier
> Beyond which safety and danger have a different meaning.
> And he cannot return.
>
> (FR, p. 342)

The symbolism of 'crossing' is frequently used in Vedanta as well as Buddhism to denote the transition from constant Becoming to eternal Being. Krishna declares to Arjuna in the Gita, from the eternal perspective of the supreme Being:

> This is My divine maya . . . which is hard to pass beyond.
> Those who resort to Me alone cross over this maya.[24]

We encounter a similar claim in The Dhammapada:

> Go beyond the stream, Brahmin, go with all your soul: leave desires behind. When you have crossed the stream of Samsara, you will reach the land of Nirvana.[25]

The Pali term parangata, meaning 'one who has crossed over to the further shore,' is sometimes applied to one who has attained Enlightenment.[26] And the Buddha is often referred to as the Tathagata, meaning 'one who has arrived there.'[27] In other words, the seeker of reality crosses over from samsara (the phenomenal world of appearances) to nirvana, in order to arrive at the truth. It should further be understood that this crossing is made in this life, so that one arrives at the truth in this very life. Thus, when Agatha speaks of Harry as one who has "crossed the frontier" and "cannot return," she does not mean that he will die; rather, she implies that Harry has crossed the border separating the unreal from the real. He is, so to speak, on his way to Buddhahood or Enlightenment. And when he arrives at the still point, everything will be transformed in the light of eternity; hence, he can no longer return to a time-conditioned existence in the turning world.

It is noteworthy that Harry's renunciation of the ties of his family and possessions parallels that of Prince Siddhartha before he becomes the Buddha. Even Harry's departure from Wishwood closely resembles the departure of the future Buddha from Kapilavastu. Harry's car and his servant, Downing, are modern counterparts of the horse, Kanthaka, and the horse-keepeer, Channa, of the future Buddha. Both the horse and the horse-keeper are retained by the future Buddha as long as he needs them on the night of his Great Retirement. Neither of them, however, is necessary to him beyond a certain stage, for one requires no external aid for attaining nirvana. Similarly, neither his car nor his servant is essential to Harry, once he is well on his way to the still point. Downing, who is as faithful to Harry as Channa is to his master, instinctively senses that his services will not be long required:

> . . . I have a kind of feeling that his Lordship won't need me
> Very long now . . .
> I've no gift of language, but I'm sure of what I mean:
> We most of us seem to live according to circumstance,
> But with people like him, there's something inside them
> That accounts for what happens to them. You get a feeling of it.
> So I seem to know beforehand, when something's going to happen,
> And it seems quite natural, being his Lordship.
> And that's why I say now, I have a feeling
> That he won't want me long, and he won't want anybody.
>
> (FR, p. 346)

In one of his famous parables called "Crossing over by Raft," the Buddha drives home the importance of giving up even wholesome possessions after they have served their purpose; to cling to them would be as foolish as carrying a raft that has borne one across a stream on one's head.[26] Similarly, Harry's car and his servant are superfluous to him beyond a certain stage in his quest of liberation.

It would seem, then, that Harry is cast in the mould of the Buddha. And yet, his renunciation is not contradictory to the spirit of Christianity. Christ repeatedly urges those who come to him to give up all that they have and to follow him. Harry, it must be remembered, follows his "bright angels" after giving up his family ties and possessions. Is Eliot, then, preaching in a Christian guise?

By the end of The Cocktail Party, we know that Celia too has "crossed the frontier" like Harry. When she approaches Sir Harcourt-

Reilly, she is acutely conscious of the unreality of her existence in the phenomenal world and craves "the inner freedom" of the still point. She confesses that she does not really know what she yearns for, though she admits to having experienced certain ecstatic moments of desirelessness:

> I have thought at moments that the ecstasy is real
> Although those who experience it may have no reality.
> For what happened is remembered like a dream
> In which one is exalted by intensity of loving
> In the spirit, a vibration of delight
> Without desire, for desire is fulfilled
> In the delight of loving.
>
> (*CP*, p. 417)

She compares her bemused condition to that of a child, who "suddenly discovers he is only a child / Lost in a forest, wanting to go home."[28] (CP, p. 416) She does have a "clue," as Sir Harcourt points out, in "Compassion" towards finding her way out of the forest; she has already learnt "to care" for others. Compassion, as we have noted earlier, goes hand in hand with detachment.[29] Presumably, Celia has yet to learn "not to care" for herself in the sanatorium to which she is sent by Sir Harcourt. The parting advice she receives from Sir Harcourt - "Work out your salvation with diligence" - is, no doubt, an echo of the words of the Buddha. But, actually she works out her salvation in the traditional Christian manner; she leads the life of a missionary in a remote outpost of civilization called Kinkanja and becomes a Christian martyr, by being crucified to death by belligerent natives.[30] Sacrificing oneself for others' sake is doubtless held in high regard in both Vedanta and Buddhism. But the concept of missionary and martyrdom is absent from Vedanta, which does not proselytize, and are never emphasized in Buddhism, despite its proselytizing zeal. A Vedantin or a Buddhist would not deliberately court the physical suffering and death of a martyr like Celia. Krishna discourages self-torture in the Gita:

> But false austerity, for the sake of reputation, honour and reverence, is impure . . . When self-control is self-torture . . . then self-control is of darkness.[31]

The Buddha does not countenance extreme austerities either; in fact, he gives them up as fruitless in his own life:

> But the six years which the Great Being thus spent in austerities were like time spent endeavouring to tie the air into knots. And coming to the decision, "these austerities are not the way to enlightenment," he went begging through villages and market-towns for ordinary material food, and lived upon it.[32]

And after attaining nirvana, he forges the famous 'middle path' for his followers, which consists in avoiding the extremes of self-torture and self-indulgence and practising self-control. None of the Buddha's followers has to undergo physical suffering before attaining nirvana, except an elder named Moggallana, who is brutally murdered by dacoits. This death, everyone agrees, is unworthy of such a great one, who had attained nirvana. The Buddha explains that Moggallana's death, though unsuited to his present incarnation, is the fruit of his karma in past lives.[33] Unfortunately, Eliot does not furnish any such explanation for Celia's horrible death. She has already perceived the impermanence and suffering of the phenomenal world and learnt the meaning of compassion when she comes to Sir Harcourt; presumably, she cultivates detachment in the sanatorium. Why then is she crucified? The manner of her death is, to say the least, incongruous with her spiritual development.

We are driven to conclude that Eliot's attempt to 'preach the Buddhist askesis in Christian guise' has not quite succeeded in the case of Celia. No doubt, Sir Harcourt applies the words of the Buddha to Celia quite appropriately, but the manner in which she works out her salvation is dramatically unconvincing; we are not *shown* the reasons for her martyrdom.

Edward and Lavinia too are advised by Sir Harcourt to work out their salvation with diligence, and their decision to adopt the ordinary life of compromise seems more meaningful than Celia's dramatically; it is better worked out in the play. They too are on their way to the still point, but much more gradually and harmoniously than Celia. Thus, Sir Harcourt comments:

> Both ways avoid the final desolation
> Of solitude in the phantasmal world
> Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires.
>
> (*CP*, p. 419)

In short, Celia chooses the life of an ascetic (*sannyasin*) to work out her salvation, while Edward and Lavinia elect to remain husband and wife and lead the life of the householder (*grihastha*).

It is significant that Sir Harcourt's advice - "Work out your salvation with diligence" - echoes not merely the counsel of the *dying* Buddha, but also the *daily* counsel of the Buddha to his disciples:

> Then taking up his stand on the landing . . . he would exhort the congregation of the priests, saying -
> "O priests, diligently work out your salvation; . . .
> At this point some would ask the Blessed One for exercises in meditation and the Blessed One would assign them exercises suited to their several characters.[34]

The Buddha's advice is addressed to his monks, not householders, and he assigns "exercises in meditation" to suit their characters. Sir Harcourt resembles the Buddha in so far as he uses his words and guides his clients according to their temperaments. In prescribing a 'cure' to the ascetically inclined Celia as well as the more worldly Edward and Lavinia, however, he takes after Krishna, who outlines different paths suited to monks as well as householders in the *Gita*. According to pristine Buddhism, Edward and Lavinia cannot attain nirvana as householders. Vedanta is much more liberal in that it recognizes that householders such as Edward and Lavinia can be emancipated by fulfilling their duties as a consecration to God. Sir Harcourt, then, uses the words of the Buddha, but in extending their meaning to include the householders, Edward and Lavinia, he partakes of the broad spirit of Krishna. Not surprisingly, therefore, he calls the life of the householders like Edward and Lavinia "a good life" (CP, p. 417) despite its contretemps, and we find him sanctioning the way of the ascetic as well as the way of the householders as a means to salvation.

It is also interesting to note that the relationship between Sir Harcourt and Edward resembles the one between Krishna and Arjuna. Sir Harcourt singles out Edward for help and gives him most of his advice, so that Edward seems chosen like Arjuna to be led out of confusion. And yet, ironically, it is Celia, not Edward, who attains salvation in the play, just as in the Mahabharatha, it is Yudhistira, not Arjuna, who emancipates himself from the wheel. When Celia's martyrdom is brought to light, Sir Harcourt admits that he had foreseen her death at the moment of their first meeting:

> When I first met Miss Coplestone, in this room,
> I saw the image, standing behind her chair
> Of a Celia Coplestone whose face showed the astonishment
> Of the first five minutes after a violent death.
>
> (CP, p. 437)

Celia, though still alive, was already dead to Sir Harcourt. His clairvoyance seems remarkably similar to that of Krishna, who reveals to Arjuna that his enemies, though living, are already slain.[35]

Sir Harcourt, then, seems to have more than a touch of Krishna in him. He might partake of the august and compassionate manner of the

Buddha and use his words, but their significance is more Vedantic than Buddhist. They are applicable to the discriminating pursuit of life in the world (as in the case of Edward and Lavinia) as well as to its renunciation (as in the case of Celia); both ways ultimately lead to the still point.

Colby in The Confidential Clerk has no clear notion of the still point; nor does he consciously strive toward it like Becket or Harry or Celia. He is much more concerned with right action in the turning world. His true vocation and his adopted occupation are at odds with each other; though a musician at heart, he is employed as a businessman's confidential clerk. He is troubled by the discrepancy between his inner and outer worlds and yearns to make them both real. But, in his confusion, he lacks the courage, at the start, to act in tune with his inner reality. In his confusion and in the fierce debate he carries on within himself as to the course of action he should pursue, he is akin to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Just as Arjuna is cajoled out of his confusion into positive action by Krishna, so also Colby is led out of his confusion by Eggerson, who offers him the opportunity to work as a church organist. At the end of the play, when Colby decides to follow his inner prompting and be a musician, his action is essentially in accordance with the teaching of Krishna in the Gita:

> And do thy duty, even if it be humble, rather than another's even if it be great. To die in one's duty is life; to live in another's is death.[36]

Of course, Colby is not quite ready to act in a spirit of self-surrender, giving up the fruit of action; he is not too enthusiastic about Eggerson's suggestion that he should make spiritual capital out of sacred music and eventually become a minister of God. Nevertheless, even his present determination to follow his true vocation as a musician is a step in the right direction, an attempt at right action that will fructify in the lives of others and ultimately lead to the still point.

Though Colby lacks an awareness of the still point, he has access to a "secret garden," to which he can retire and hear "a music that no one else could hear." (CC, p. 473) He is vouchsafed certain oblique "hints" and "guesses," (DS, p. 190) in other words, about the ultimate reality beyond all appearances. But, he has not yet refined his awareness to the extent of actively striving toward it. All that he is conscious of is an awful feeling of being "alone" in his garden; he senses that if God would walk in his garden, he would no longer be alone and even the world outside his garden would become "real" and "acceptable." (CC, p. 474) But, God has not yet started to walk in his garden; significantly, neither a rose nor a lotus blooms in Colby's garden.

There is no mention of either the still point or the rose-garden in The Elder Statesman. However, Lord Claverton rejoices at the end of having been "freed from the self that pretends to be someone" (emphasis mine) (ES, p. 582) and when at last he dares to be "the man he really is," he speaks in a language reminiscent of Becket's when he becomes "an instrument of God":

> I feel at peace now
> It is the peace that ensues upon contrition
> When contrition ensues upon knowledge of the truth.
> . . .
> I've only just now had the illumination
> Of knowing what love is. We all think we know,
> But how few of us do! And now I feel happy -
> In spite of everything, in defiance of reason,
> I have been brushed by the wing of happiness.

(ES, p. 581)

It is clear that Lord Claverton has now gained an awareness of something beyond the daily round of his existence. His daughter, Monica, is quick to perceive the transformation taking place in him and observes to her fiancé, Charles, that her father "has gone too far to return" to them. (ES, p. 583) We remember Agatha's comment in The Family Reunion that Harry has "crossed the frontier" and "cannot return." (FR, p. 342) Lord Claverton, then, has passed over from the unreal to the real, like Harry, and is on his way to the still point.

All the protagonists in Eliot's plays, without exception, seem to be advancing along various spokes of the wheel of samsara toward the still point. The paths they pursue and the ideas they articulate may be different, varying according to their temperaments, but the end they have in view is the same. This is completely in accordance with what Krishna states in the Gita, speaking from the eternal perspective of God:

> In any way that men love me in that same way they find my love; for many are the paths of men, but they all in the end come to me.[37]

The other characters in the play may lack the clarity of vision which the protagonists attain in the end. Nevertheless, they become aware of the change in the protagonists and react to that change, and in this lies their salvation. "They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son, and they who have seen the Son have seen the Father also." Erring mortals they may be, full of deceit and treachery; still, they too are being drawn irresistibly and all unknowingly toward the still point. The subsidiary characters, then, revolve around the protagonists, while the protagonists, in their turn, revolve around the still point.

What we witness in Eliot's drama, therefore, is an 'acting out' of the philosophical themes he explores in his poetry, particularly in the

Four Quartets. What we perceive is "the pattern behind the pattern,"[38] unity in diversity. And what we gain is the awareness that we too are part of the greater pattern; that our attention is centred on the actors who are all circling around the still point in their own individual orbits.

Eliot does not elaborate on the nature of the still point. Instead, he leaves us the task of piecing together the hints scattered throughout his poetry and drama, particularly the Four Quartets, and of forming a coherent picture: the still point is thus "a liberation / From the future as well as the past;" (LG, p. 195) liberation, however, is not negation, for when we are liberated, we consider "the future / And the past with an equal mind;" (DS, p. 188) in other words, past and future are reconciled. The still point spells "inner freedom from the practical desire," (BN, p. 173) but freedom from desire is not desirelessness, for there is still the "unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless," (DS, p. 186) and "the expanding of love beyond desire." (LG, p. 195) The still point is "release from the inner and outer compulsion" (BN, p. 173) but it is not inaction, for "right action is freedom / From past and future also," (DS, p. 190) and one acts freely when one has the source of movement within.

The still point, then, is not freedom from time as such but freedom from the temporality of time; not freedom from desire as such, but freedom from slavery to shifting desires; not freedom from agony as such, but freedom from the agony of agony, through understanding and compassion; not freedom from death as such - for "the time of death is every moment" (DS, p. 188) - but freedom from the fear of death. It is a condition of "complete simplicity," (LG, p. 198) when one lives unattached and clings to nothing in the world, rising above, without negating, the basic facts of impermanence and suffering. Or, as Iqbal Singh puts it in his book, Gautama Buddha,

> Here we are in a universe which is devoid of tension - not because contraries and conflicts have ceased to operate, but because they have somehow become intelligible. Here, in the very contemplation of transiency, we receive a measure of eternity . . . Here the wheel turns and does not turn. Here the paradox is no longer a paradox, but rather a luminous certitude. Here we are in the very heart of peace.[39]

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

[1] T.S.Eliot in his "Introduction" to Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 5.

[2] Indian philosophical and mystical disciplines, from the Upanishads to the TM (Transcendental Meditation) of the present day, have but one object in view: the penetration into the Self of man, to the timeless centre of the wheel of existence, which spells the end of rebirth and suffering. This penetration can take place at any moment in time; salvation is a perpetual possibility independent of any historical event.

[3] Cf. T.S.Eliot, The Criterion, 4, No. 1 (Jan. 1926), p. 5:

> Art reflects the transitory as well as the permanent condition of the soul; we cannot wholly measure the present by what the past has been, nor by what we think the future ought to be.

[4] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 106.

[5] "Udana 8," The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part II, tr. F.L.Woodward (London, Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 97.

[6] The Upanishads, tr. F.Max Müller (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1962), pp. 137-138.

[7] "Udana 80-81," Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, ed. Edward Conze (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1954), p. 95.

[8] Rudyard Kipling, Kim (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1901), p. 258.

[9] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1907), II, 528.

[10] T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934), p. 43.

[11] Audrey F. Cahill, T.S.Eliot and the Human Predicament (Pietermaritzburg, Univ. of Natal Press, 1967), pp. 58-59.

[12] A Dictionary of Symbols (London: Routedge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 275.

[13] Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery (London: North Holland Pub. Co., 1974), p. 305.

[14] For a detailed discussion see Ajit Mookerjee and Madhu Khanna's The Tantric Way (London, Thames and Hudson, 1977), pp. 66-69.

[15] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 54.

[16] Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Dance of Siva: Fourteen Indian Essays (N.Y.: The Sunwise Turn Inc., 1918), p. 65.

[17] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 54. See also Shree Purohit Swami, The Ten Principal Upanishads (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1970), p. 92.

[18] Ajit Mookerjee and Madhu Khanna, The Tantric Way, p. 68.

[19] Herbert V. Guenther, The Tantric View of Life (London: Shambala Publications, 1972), pp. 82-83.

[20] Ajit Mookerjee and Madhu Khanna, The Tantric Way, p. 62.

[21] Ibid., pp. 64-66.

[22] See T.S.Eliot's "Choruses from The Rock," The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 160:

> And the men who turned towards the light and were known
> of the light
> Invented the Higher Religions; and the Higher Religions
> were good
> And led men from light to light . . .

Revelation through an Incarnation is not a unique event in Hindu thought as it is in Christianity. However, nowhere in Hindu philosophical literature is Revelation through an Incarnation depicted so magnificently as in the Bhagavad Gita. Indeed, as a poem of annunciation, it is unparalleled. It is, therefore, quite natural for Eliot to allude to the Gita while he dealt with the annunciation in "The Dry Salvages." He seems to have assimilated the teachings of the Gita to the point of producing them as his own.

[23] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. and ed. Swami Jagadishwarananda and Swami Jagadananda (Udbodhan: Sanskrit-Bengali Edition, 1962), p. 258.

[24] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Eliot Deutsch (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 74.

[25] The Dhammapada (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 89.

[26] Pali-English Dictionary (Colombo: Pali Text Society, 1954), p. 154.

[27] See Buddhism, ed. Richard A. Gard (N.Y.: George Braziller, 1962), p. 71:

> The compound word Tathagata may be broken up as Tatha (there) + Gata (gone), or as Tatha (there) + Gata (arrived) . . .

[28] See The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 53:

> When thy mind leaves behind its dark forest of delusion, thou shalt go beyond the scriptures of times past and still to come.

See also Sankara's The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (N.Y.: The New American Library, 1947), p. 40:

> Scorched by the fierce flames of the world-forest, the disciple speaks these words. The great soul looks at the disciple who thus seeks refuge in him, and his eyes are wet with tears of mercy. Immediately, he frees his disciple from his fear.

[29] See Chapter 3, pp. 66-69.

[30] See Baird Shuman's "Buddhist Overtones in Eliot's Cocktail Party," Modern Language Notes, 72 (1957), 426-427, for an example of gross misinterpretation. Shuman accepts as a fact that Eliot was influenced by Buddhism and sees attributes of a Buddhist monk in Celia. He comments:

> Following Reilly's advice to 'work out your salvation with diligence,' she proceeds to do so by implicitly subscribing to the four noble truths of Buddhism . . . Her ultimate satisfaction (again according to the Buddhist rationale) is achieved in the attainment of nirvana.

This is incorrect. Celia does not attain nirvana "according to the Buddhist rationale," which does not advocate martyrdom as a means to the realization of "the still point." Celia follows Reilly's advice no doubt, but she works out her salvation in the traditional Christian manner.

[31] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. Juan Mascaro, p. 113.

[32] H.C.Warren, Buddhism in Translations (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1963), p. 71.

[33] Ibid., p. 224.

[34] Ibid., p. 93.

[35] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. Juan Mascaro, p. 92.

[36] Ibid., p. 59.

[37] Ibid., p. 62. Hindu philosophical thought and religion are basically flexible and liberal. They accept all the paths to Reality shown by different seers and prophets at different times and places as equally valid. No single doctrine can be taken to be the 'last word,' as all of them are essentially speculations on the unifying principle of the universe. Thus the Vedic darshanas, the Upanishads, the Gita,

Patanjali's Yoga, Sankara's non-duality, Ramanuja's qualified monism, Madva's dualism and even Buddhism and Christianity have peaceful co-existence in the Hindu view of life. See Arthur Osborne's Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 40.

[38] T.S.Eliot, Selected Essays, pp. 189-190.

[39] Quoted by Christmas Humphreys in Buddhism (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1951), p. 215.

CONCLUSION

THE ONE REALITY

"Tat tvam asi, Svetaketu. Thou art THAT."

- Chandogya Upanishad

The time has come to sum up our investigation of the poetry and drama of T.S.Eliot in the light of Vedanta and Buddhism.

At the outset, we made a brief survey of the major critical statements on Eliot and found that most critics regard Eliot's use of Indian philosophical thought as not quite significant, in spite of the direct references to Indian philosophical texts in his works. We showed that Eliot's use of Indian thought cannot be dismissed as mere "exoticism." We held, moreover, that Eliot's own ironic claim of having been left in a state of "enlightened mystification" by his study of Indian philosophy at Harvard must be taken with a large pinch of salt, especially since he later admitted, in no uncertain terms, that he was influenced by Indian philosophy and poetry.

The first part of our study, called "The Growth of a Poet's Mind" may be deemed biographical; it was devoted to the exploration of Eliot's interest in Indian thought at different stages in his life.

We began by enquiring into Eliot's family background and the various impressions of India he received during his early youth in St.Louis. We discovered that Eliot grew up in an atmosphere of liberal Unitarianism and under the influence of a mother who was endowed with a remarkably open mind, a lively imagination and wide-ranging interests. Apparently, these factors contributed to the development of a ecumenical and tolerant spirit in young Eliot and encouraged him to explore and assimilate thoughts and perspectives beyond his own creed. We established, moreover, that Eliot's interest in India went back to the days of his early youth, when he read Emerson, Fitzgerald, Arnold and Kipling. We found also that he was quite captivated by the "exotic" India at first, but that his early fascination with the "exotic" gradually gave place to a mature interest in the metaphysical "subtleties" of India. (Chapter 1: "Youthful Impressions")

Next, we traced Eliot's preoccupation with things Indian through his years at Harvard. We found that Eliot attended Harvard in an era when scholarly interest in Indian studies was at its peak; that he came into contact with a number of scholars and teachers, who were interested in Indian thought and enthusiastically advocated an East-West _rapprochement_ in the realm of ideas; and that he studied Indian languages (Sanskrit and Pali) as well as Indian philosophical and literary texts under Charles Lanman and James Woods for two and a half years. Thus, it became quite clear to us that Eliot had more than a nodding acquaintance with Indian thought and that his understanding of the "subtleties" of the Indian philosophers ran quite deep. (Chapter 2: "The Harvard Years")

Then, we scrutinized the issues of the _Criterion_, in order to determine if Eliot's interest in Indian thought extended beyond his student days. We uncovered some very interesting facts: Eliot published a considerable number of articles and book reviews pertaining to India quite regularly in the _Criterion_; apparently, he even commissioned a couple of articles which dealt favourably with ancient Indian philosophical systems and stressed the need for East-West ideo-synthesis; some articles bore a direct relation to his poetry and drama, containing ideas and even words which were distinctly echoed in Eliot's works; though he included a few book reviews on modern India, he was definitely more interested in publishing articles dealing with ancient Indian philosophical thought. We could not but conclude that Eliot was greatly attracted to classical Indian thought and that he was intrigued by the ideal of East-West ideo-synthesis. We felt we were justified, therefore, in scrutinizing Eliot's poetry and drama to ascertain whether he assimilated Indian philosophical themes and symbols in his works, motivated by a desire to try and bridge the philosophical and religious traditions of the East and the West. (Chapter 3: "The Years of the Criterion")

The second part of our study, titled "In the Light of Vedanta and Buddhism," may be deemed analytical; it was devoted to the comparison of the fundamental intuitions underlying Eliot's poetry and drama with those of Vedanta and Buddhism. This comparative exercise had a two-fold purpose: to gauge the deep influence of Vedanta and Buddhism on Eliot's Weltanschauung and to gain some insight into his basic vision of the human condition.

The impermanence of all phenomena and the universality of suffering is a key concept in both Vedanta and Buddhism. Christianity too projects a tragic sense of suffering and of the fleetingness of the things of this world. We found the same tragic awareness of impermanence and suffering running through the major poems and plays of Eliot. What emerged was one of Eliot's basic concerns in his poetry and drama: the perennial problem of human suffering in a constantly changing universe and the search for a positive way to freedom from suffering. Eliot was responding to the same fundamental intuition that moved Krishna or the Buddha or, for that matter, Christ, and embodying his responses in poetry. (Chapter 4: "Impermanence and Suffering")

The human predicament in the midst of universal change and suffering is often expressed in Vedanta and Buddhism by the image of the wheel. Nor is the symbolism of the wheel alien to Christian thought. We found the symbolism of the wheel implicitly expressed in certain memorable passages in the poems published before The Waste Land. From The Waste Land onwards, the wheel was explicitly evoked with increasing precision and complexity of meaning in Eliot's poetry and drama. In The Waste Land and The Family Reunion, moreover, the wheel was specifically linked to the Hindu-Buddhist notion of metempsychosis and reincarnation. What the wheel conveyed, in the final analysis, was "the deeper design, the pattern "of human misery and bondage which is universal." (Chapter 5: "The Wheel")

The cause of such universal suffering and bondage is identified in both Vedanta and Buddhism as craving. This craving or thirst (tanha) for the transient things of the phenomenal world is explicitly discouraged in Christianity too. On examining the words and deeds of the characters in Eliot's major poems and plays, we perceived that they were all subject, at some stage or other, to an incessant craving for sensual gratifications, which bred in them an attachment to the ephemeral things of the phenomenal world. But their craving or thirst was never satisfied and so their lives were full of suffering; one and all, they were enchained to the wheel, whirled about by shifting desires. It was clear that craving and its concomitant suffering has as much significance in the universal scheme of things for Eliot as for Krishna, the Buddha or Christ.

When an individual continues to be a slave of shifting desires, despite the resultant suffering, and remains bound to the wheel, he is said to be involved, according to Vedanta, in the darkness of maya or the world of appearances. The concept of maya attains its fullest flowering, perhaps, in the non-dualistic (a-dvaita) Vedanta of the eighth century philosopher, Sankara. According to him, the one indivisible unchanging reality (Brahman), or that which is, appears to be many and constitutes the world of our everyday experience. The world of appearances, says Sankara, "is and is not;" it is neither real nor non-existent. And yet, this apparent paradox is simply a statement of fact - a fact which Sankara calls maya, following the Upanishads and the Gita. This maya or world-appearance not only conceals the reality of Brahman, but also distorts it. Not that Brahman undergoes any transformation; it remains eternally infinite and unchanged; it simply appears as this world to us, in our ignorance. Not only do we fail to perceive this reality, but we also superimpose an apprent world upon this reality, just as we superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope in the dark. In short, we substitute a phenomenal world for the noumenon and take the unreal for the real; we are subject to maya, the world-appearance. Sankara's concept of maya and Brahman, we found, was remarkably close to Bradley's theory of appearance and reality, on which Eliot wrote his doctoral dissertation. Presumably, then, Eliot amalgamated what Bradley calls the inexplicable fact of world-appearance and what Sankara calls maya in his poetic evocation of the multiple facets of the turning world and its unreality in the light of the still point. Not surprisingly, therefore, the characters in Eliot's major poems and plays were seen to be subject to maya, deluded by the world of appearances. Their perception of an independent material world of objects, persons and processes was grounded in a pervasive error; they took the real for unreal and the unreal for real. Consequently, they found themselves enslaved by shifting desires and bound to the wheel, which involves them in endless suffering. They were reduced, in short, to shadow-boxing with reality. (Chapter 6: "Maya")

The overwhelming paradox of both Vedanta and Buddhism is that man, who is deluded by maya or the world-appearance, enchained to the wheel, can still emancipate himself from craving, compulsive action and suffering and find peace that passes understanding. Christ too affirms that the sensitive and discriminating individual can find refuge from the woes of the world in the eternal Being of God. We found the very same intuition underlying the poetry and drama of Eliot. The intuition can only be intermittently perceived in the poems before The Waste Land and often took the form of an inexpressible longing to be freed of suffering by a Christ or a Buddha figure. The intuition was concretized into a momentary apprehension of reality or experience of freedom in the hyacinth garden of The Waste Land. By the time the Four Quartets came to be written, the intuition of the still point of the turning world had become central to Eliot's poetic ethos. It was 'acted out' in his plays, so that all his characters could finally be seen to be revolving around the still point. We could not but note that Eliot consistently used a negative mode of expression, closely resembling the language of Vedanta and Buddhism, to describe the experience of the still point. We could not also avoid perceiving that he had recourse to the Oriental symbol of the lotus and the Tantric mandala, in order to represent his own momentary experience of freedom in the rose-garden. As for the specific method he prescribed for attaining the still point - to act in a spirit of self-surrender, without thinking of the fruit of action - we had merely to point out that it was consciously borrowed from the Gita. (Chapter 7: "The Still Point")

Our approach to Eliot's poetry and drama has taken into account Eliot's fundamental Christian framework and the influence of Greek and Latin authors on his works. However, Eliot's Christian outlook and his classical leanings are both beyond question; they are already so well mapped out that it would have been superfluous for us to cover the same ground. Our study has focussed, therefore, on Eliot's use of Indian thought. Our sole aim in this study has been to provide some fresh insights into Eliot's poetry and drama and thereby highlight yet another dimension of his world view.

Our comparison of the fundamental intuitions underlying Eliot's poetry and drama with those of Vedanta and Buddhism has brought to light a number of correspondences between Eliot's poetic vision and Indian thought. These correspondences are too striking to be mere coincidence, too frequent to be fortuitous. It must be admitted, therefore, that the "subtleties" of the Indian philosophers are quite significant to an understanding of Eliot's basic vision of the human condition.

It is clear that the philosophical and spiritual orientation of Eliot is essentially in accordance with the basic tenets of Christianity as it is understood in the West as well as of Vedanta and Buddhism, and that these truths are fused together in his poetry and drama.[1] Consequently, there is, at first, the penetrating awareness of the pervasiveness of suffering and impermanence, the tragic consciousness that "the deeper design is that of human misery and bondage which is universal."[2] Next, there is the recognition that the root-cause of all suffering is the craving that impels us to cling to transient material phenomena.

Then, there is the realization that through the practice of detachment from craving and compassion towards those who suffer, the universal change and suffering can be transcended, though not negated, in the apprehension of the timeless in time. And above all, there is the deep feeling that permeates his works from beginning to end, the heart-felt yearning for a mystic union with the Ultimate Reality in one's own being, a yearning born out of the conviction that one must work out one's salvation with diligence, and expressing itself through passionate prayer, which his poetry as a whole may be said to embody in the last analysis.

The basic concern that animates Eliot's poetic "raids on the inarticulate" (EC, p. 182) - the awareness of man's intimate connection with both time and eternity, within the framework of the fact of human bondage and the possibility of human freedom - is absolutely universal and may well be called the '_philosophia perennis_' that surfaces variously time and again in the religious and philosophical traditions of the East and the West. Thus, the same awareness of human frailty and strength at the core of _The Waste Land_ or the _Four Quartets_ is found in the _Bhagavad Gita_, the Buddha's Fire Sermon and the Sermon on the Mount. A similar preoccupation underlies the wisdom of Yagnavalkya in the _Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad_, the penitential soul-searching of St.Augustine in his _Confessions_ and the sage reflections of the anonymous author of _The Cloud of Unknowing_, separated though they are by time and space. In a brilliant and perceptive essay called "The Minimum Working Hypothesis," Aldous Huxley has outlined the fundamental intuitions of the perennial philosophy:

> That there is a Godhead, Ground, Brahman, Clear Light of the Void, which is the unmanifested principle of the universe.

> That the Ground is at once transcendent and immanent.
> That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identical with the divine Ground.
> That to achieve this unitive knowledge of the Godhead is the final end and purpose of human existence.
> That there is a Law or Dharma which must be obeyed, a Tao or a Way which must be followed, if men are to achieve this final end.
> That the more there is of self, the less there is of the Godhead; and that the Tao is therefore a way of humility and love, the Dharma a living law of mortification and self-transcending awareness.[3]

Consequently, it is idle to claim any originality for the basic intuitions of Eliot.[4] What can and must be recognized, however, is his firm grasp of the fundamental intuitions of Christian, Buddhist and Vedantic writings, his sure catalytic instinct in bringing these leitmotifs together in his poetry and drama and his intense evocation of them through his words. These are the unique characteristics that set him apart from his contemporaries, many of whom turn to the ancient East or West for inspiration and guidance in an Age of Anxiety. Yeats, for instance, makes periodic inroads into Eastern and Western mysticism, but he is easily side-tracked from purely philosophical concerns to occult practices, so that the vision that emerges lacks clarity. Pound's spasmodic dabblings in Buddhism are unconvincing and shot through with error. Huxley's encyclopaedic knowledge is no doubt admirable, but he attempts a philosophical, not a poetic, synthesis. After making all valid discounts, it must be admitted that Eliot's eclecticism is the most convincing and comprehensive in poetry. It is also remarkably free of all pretentiousness and sentimentality, of the misunderstanding born out of self-pity and of the vanity of striking an attitude for the sake of self-glorification, which are the hallmarks of the romantic decadence - perhaps most clearly exemplified in the flamboyant figure of Oscar Wilde. Eliot's vision is also one of the most reliable, if one is looking for a momentary stay against confusion in the contemporary chaos.

It may be objected that Eliot's commitment to Christianity inhibits his vision, resulting in contradictions, where there need be none (e.g., his rather unconvincing effort to reconcile the Christian Incarnation with the Hindu *Avatar*). On the other hand, critics like Helen Gardner find it difficult to deal with Eliot's apparent idiosyncrasy in venturing far beyond the bounds of his Christianity. Though a professed Anglo-Catholic, he includes unorthodox and even non-Christian elements in his poetry and drama. Unable to understand this, the critics tend to slight the 'Indian aspect' of Eliot or even disapprove of Eliot's 'magpie' habit of accumulating 'tidbits' from various sources. Helen Gardner, for instance, finds the introduction of Krishna and the *Gita* in "The Dry Salvages" an error.[5]

From the strictly Christian point of view, Christ is *the* Incarnation, the only means of salvation for the individual. Eliot obviously accepts this. Why, then, does he incorporate *odd* ideas from other religions? A valid question, no doubt. But Eliot does not provide a clear-cut answer, leaving his poetry to speak for itself. Unfortunately, his critics take his silence to be a confession of failure, failure to reconcile apparently contradictory doctrines.

But to those familiar with Indian philosophy, there is really no contradiction. As we have pointed out earlier, Hindu thought is basically flexible and liberal and permits varied doctrinal viewpoints within the fold of a single religion. Arthur Osborne writes with great perception:

There are of course great differences of understanding between

> man and man, as in all religions, but the religion itself is the same. What distinguishes Hinduism from more uniform religions is merely its enormous scope, offering diverse levels of understanding and modes of approach . . .. If Truth stands solid, like a mountain, it may wear a different face as seen from every side and different paths may lead up to it, running at short range in different directions.[6]

According to the non-dualistic interpretation of the key texts of Hinduism, Truth or Absolute Reality is unknowable by human reason, so that all speculations and practices are merely a 'minimum working hypothesis' for the attainment of this Reality. Consequently, the individual is free to pursue any path that suits his temperament and even borrow ideas or derive inspiration from other paths. Thus, when Eliot shows an inclination towards the teachings of Krishna or the Buddha, while retaining his strong bond to Christianity, there is no contradiction in his outlook from the Indian point of view. In Hindu terms, Christ too is an avatar, a Saviour and an Incarnation of God, and to seek Truth or Absolute Reality through him is a perfectly valid procedure. Moreover, in the Hindu view of life, it is not necessary for the individual to be 'converted' to a different creed in order to seek Reality. In fact, Krishna positively discourages conversion in the Gita:

> And do thy duty, even if it be humble, rather than another's, even if it be great. To die in one's duty is life: to live in another's is death.[7]

'Duty' here has the wider connotation of 'one's natural bent of mind or norm in life.' In the Hindu view of life, the search for the ultimate Reality takes precedence over the particular means an individual adopts in his search. To be one with the Eternal Godhead: this is the unifying principle of Hindu thought, which keeps all the alternate ways to Truth in purposeful togetherness.

This is where Eliot's eclectic temperament coincides with the all-embracing attitude in Hindu thought. As we have already remarked in the "Introduction," Eliot is best thought of as a 'kavi' or a poet-philosopher in the Indian sense of the term, as one who is more interested in seeking "the still point of the turning world," a unifying principle of the universe and a means of transcending the flux and suffering of the phenomenal world through his poetry than in constructing a logical and systematic world-view. It is quite appropriate, therefore, that he should retain his fundamental Christian framework, while incorporating Hindu-Buddhist ideas in his poetry and drama. This does not imply that Eliot is less a Christian poet than he is universally acknowledged to be; rather, this indicates than Eliot's poetic approach to "the still point" is remarkably similar to the tolerant and pragmatic approach of the "Forest Philosophers" who composed the Upanishads and of Krishna, the divine author of the Gita.

Eliot's affinity to the Hindu view of life, particularly that which finds expression in the Upanishads and the Gita, is apparent despite his strong early attraction towards Buddhism. We know that Eliot was tremendously impressed by the noble and compassionate life of the Buddha and that he took the trouble of studying Pali, in order to be able to study the Buddhist texts in the original. We know too that at the time of writing The Waste Land he contemplated becoming a Buddhist. And we have seen how he borrows Buddhist ideas and symbols (which have a great deal in common with Hindu ideas and symbols) and makes use of them in his poetry and drama.

A bird's eye view of Eliot's works reveals that the austere spirit of Buddhism is most pronounced in The Waste Land. The poem evokes an atmosphere of intense spiritual distress and advocates a thoroughgoing renunciation of the life of the senses. By repeating a single word "burning," which he borrows from the Buddha's Fire Sermon, Eliot forcefully underscores the central thought of the poem: we are all afire and burning with carnal desires and we thirst for their gratification; consequently, our lives are full of suffering and we spend most of our lives wandering in a spiritual waste land. Implicit in the poem is the counsel that we should renounce our thirst or craving for the transitory things of this world in order to be free of suffering. Apparently, therefore, Eliot is responding to the ascetic spirit of Buddhism, whose central teaching is that the freedom of '_Nirvana_' can be attained through self-denial. The severity of this Buddhist injunction is only partially tempered by Eliot's appeal to the crashing chords of thunder towards the end of the poem. The Upanishadic thunder counsels one to be charitable, compassionate and self-controlled, but it does not wholly mitigate the cauterizing effect of the Buddhist counsel. We are left, therefore, with an overwhelming impression that this phenomenal world must be completely forsaken in order to gain the everlasting peace of _nirvana_. In other words, the poem as a whole creates in us an aversion towards the life of the senses in this world.

But as we progress from _The Waste Land_ (1922) towards _The Elder Statesman_ (1958), we detect a gentle but remarkable change in Eliot's attitude. There is actually an unusual development from renunciation to an acceptance of life, from asceticism to tolerance. The strong aversion, which Eliot shows as a young man towards the life of the senses is gradually toned down, though the superiority of the self-abnegating contemplative individual is always recognized. We first find Eliot accepting the life of the householder, as opposed to the life of the ascetic, as a 'good life' in The Cocktail Party (1950). Not surprisingly, therefore, his last two plays, The Confidential Clerk (1954) and The Elder Statesman (1959), are built around the close-knit structure of the play, sanctifying the life of the householder against that of the contemplative mystic.

It is true that Buddhist ideas are present to a marked degree in The Cocktail Party, as Shuman has pointed out.[8] It is also true that Sir Harcourt Reilly, the psychoanalyst in the play, uses the words of the Buddha - "Work out your salvation with diligence" - when he guides Celia, Edward and Lavinia. But, as we have already seen, he applies the Buddha's advice to the discriminating pursuit of life in the world (as in the case of Edward and Lavinia) as well as to its renunciation (as in the case of Celia). Sir Harcourt, in fact, resembles Krishna more than the Buddha, in prescribing different paths suited to householders as well as ascetics. Eliot, in other words, borrows the Buddha's words and gently twists them so that their significance is more Vedantic than Buddhist.[9]

Eliot seems to have definitely changed his perspective, therefore, from asceticism, so conspicuous in The Waste Land, to an acceptance of life and humanity in the world. In short, we see him gently drifting from Buddhism to Vedanta - toward the ideal preached by Krishna in the Gita, that of acting in a spirit of self-surrender, without caring for the fruit of action, regardless of the particular role we play in life. This shift in Eliot's attitude can be observed as early as the concluding section of The Waste Land, where he invokes the voice of the thunder of the Upanishads to temper the severity of the Buddha's Fire

Sermon. The shift becomes more marked in "The Dry Salvages," where the figures of Krishna and Arjuna stand for the resolute pursuit of life, admonishing us that we must accept the consequences of our own past deeds and die every moment to our egotistic little selves in order that we may partake of eternity. The shift is definitely achieved in The Cocktail Party, where the Buddhist, Hindu and even Christian ideas are perfectly synthesized.

The framework of the Bhagavad Gita, then, seems to fit exactly with Eliot's mature world-view. Its all-embracing universality and tolerance seem particularly well-suited to Eliot's own mellowed philosophy of life. Indeed, with the exception of Dante's Divine Comedy, no work seems more relevant to an understanding of Eliot's poetry and drama than the Bhagavad Gita. Not only does it synthesize Buddhist and Hindu ideas and broaden them into an acceptance of humanity, it also harmonizes well with Eliot's particular brand of Christianity.

It would seem, then, that the non-Christian elements in Eliot's poetry and drama are there with a definite purpose; they are not present due to some odd fancy of an idiosyncratic poet. Eliot seems to have gradually assimilated them and established a natural and poetic reconciliation. He is certainly not following a process of elimination in order to reach the full Christian revelation. Instead, he is deliberately reaching out beyond the confines of his Anglo-Catholicism and Occidental personality in a genuine attempt at East-West ideo-synthesis.

Above all, it must be remembered that Eliot is not a systematic philosopher, bent on expounding his world-view; he is a poet, whose task is that of evocation, not of explication. Hence, the apparently unresolved conflicts and inexplicable paradoxes in his poetry and drama do not undermine the strength of his vision; rather, they add power to it.

Ultimately, what makes Eliot's poetry both precious and illuminating is the fact that he has grasped the primordial and most enduring truth of the human race and expressed THAT which knows no distinctions of East or West, no boundaries of space and time. Thus it is that Eliot's vision bridges traditions and makes of him a remarkable and effective synthesizer. And herein lies the justification for reading Eliot's poetry in the light of the *Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad* or the *Gita* or the Fire Sermon or the New Testament: for, they not only provide a deeper insight into Eliot's poetry, but also themselves take on a richer glow from his poetry, and become more poignantly real and contemporaneously significant to us in the twentieth century.

In the end, of course, it is the vision that counts and what we do about the vision. We must never mistake the sign for the thing signified and cease from exploration for a condition of complete simplicity, when

> all shall be well
> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one.

(LG, p. 198)

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] There is a growing understanding in recent years that Eliot's works compose a continuity and that his individual poems can only be fully themselves when they are placed and explored in that continuity. See Northrop Frye, T.S.Eliot (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), p. 49.

[2] T.S.Eliot in his "Introduction" to Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 5.

[3] Aldous Huxley, "The Minimum Working Hypothesis," Vedanta for the Western World (N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 34.

[4] Cf. "East Coker," Four Quartets, p. 182:

> And so each venture
> Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
> With shabby equipment always deteriorating
> In the general mess of imprecision and feeling
> Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
> By strength and submission, has already been discovered
> Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
> To emulate - but there is no competition -
> There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
> And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
> That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss,
> For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

[5] Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S.Eliot (N.Y.: E.P.Dutton and Co., 1959), p. 173.

[6] Arthur Osborne, Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), pp. 59-60.

[7] The Bhagavad Gita, tr. by Juan Mascaro, p. 100.

[8] Baird Shuman, "Buddhist Overtones in The Cocktail Party," Modern Language Notes, 72 (1957), 426-427.

[9] See Chapter 7, p. 243-245.

APPENDIX I

Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(BN, p. 173)

It is interesting to compare Valéry's conception of the dance as a liberating force with Eliot's collocation of "the still point" and the "dance." According to Valéry's Socrates in L' Ame et la danse, the dance is a poem: "this world of exact forces and studied illusions" represents the mind in movement. It is, says Socrates, the mysterious movement of life itself transformed into a dancing girl, "making what is divine in a mortal woman shine before our eyes." He continues as if inspired by the very ecstasy of the dancer:

> She turns, and all that is visible detaches itself from the soul; all the slime of her soul is separated at the last from its most pure; men and things will form around her a shapeless whirl of less . . .
> She would rest motionless in the very center of her movement. Alone, alone to herself, like the axis of the world . . .

Socrates argues that the poet, like the dancer, may attain complete possession of his Self and reach a pitch of perfection which can only be momentarily recaptured. Thus, poetry gives us the power to "penetrate into another world," just like the dance. And the last word of the dancer, as of the poet is: "O Whirlwind! I was in thee, O Movement - outside all things . . . "[1]

Eliot knew Valéry's work. He wrote an introduction to Valéry's The Art of Poetry (N.Y.: Random House, 1958), translated from the French by Denise Folliot. He also wrote a critique on Valéry's works in his book, From Poe to Valéry.

Eliot and Valéry were not the only ones to be fascinated with the dance. Yeats used the symbol of the dance in "Among School Children" and "Byzantium":

> How can we tell the dancer from the dance?[2]
>
> And all complexities of fury leave,
> Dying into a dance,
> An agony of trance,
> An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.[3]

And Rilke used the symbol of the dance in a manner that closely resembled Valéry's:

> As in the hand a match glows, swiftly white
> before it bursts in flame and to all sides
> licks its quivering tongues: within the ring
> of spectators her wheeling dance is bright,
> nimble, fervid, twitches and grows wide.
>
> And suddenly is made of pure fire.[4]

NOTES TO APPENDIX

[1] See Paul Valéry, Dialogues, tr. William McCausland Stewart (N.Y.: Pantheon Books Inc., 1956), pp. 57-62.

[2] W.B.Yeats, "Among School Children," The Norton Introduction to Literature, ed. Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty, J. Paul Hunter, 2nd ed. (N.Y.: W.W.Norton and Co., Inc., 1977), p. 848.

[3] Ibid., p. 849.

[4] Rainer Maria Rilke: Fifty Selected Poems with English Translations, tr. C.F.MacIntyre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941), p. 87.

APPENDIX II

We mentioned a few significant works on T.S.Eliot by Indian authors in the Introduction. A few other recent works by Indian authors came to our attention too late to be included in the main body of the thesis. We shall, therefore, discuss them briefly here.

F.M.Ishak, in his book *The Mystical Philosophy of T.S.Eliot* (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1970), makes an ambitious attempt to elucidate the mystical connotations of the poems of Eliot and to trace the philosophical and literary influences that contributed to his 'mysticism.' The book provides some lucid and refreshing insights into Eliot's poetry and draws on both Eastern and Western mystical philosophy. But it does not clearly bring out the fundamental intuitions underlying the poetry of Eliot. The book is, moreover, limited in its scope; it confines itself to Eliot's plays, leaving out his plays. It alls short, therefore, of a complete assessment of East-West ideo-synthesis in Eliot's works and of his basic vision of the human condition.

Amarnath Dwivedi's book, *Indian Thought and Tradition in T.S.Eliot's Poetry* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1977), sets out to evaluate the Indian influences on Eliot's poetry. Dr.Dwivedi dwells painstakingly on the 'explicit' references to Indian philosophical thought in Eliot's poetry. He ventures far afield into Indian myths and wisdom literature in order to squeeze out the last little drop of meaning from these few 'explicit' references. The attempt, though laudable, does violence to Eliot's poetic ethos; for, it subtly undermines the East-West *rapprochement* in Eliot, by giving insufficient emphasis to the Western, notably Christian, elements in his poetry. Dr.Dwivedi does not pay too much attention to the 'implicit' use Eliot makes of Indian philosophical themes and symbols: Eliot's use of Tantrism in the Four Quartets, for instance, is not mentioned. Moreover, Dr.Dwivedi does not examine the Indian influences on Eliot's plays. Nor does he attempt to reconcile the Hindu-Buddhist philosophical notions with the Christian doctrine in his poetry. Hence, his book fails to give a fully rounded picture of Eliot's world-view.

G.Nageswara Rao's book, The Epic of the Soul (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1977), is strictly limited to the Four Quartets. According to Dr.Rao, adequate critical attention has not been paid to the radically new form of the Quartets as "the epic of the soul." Borrowing his critical terminology and perspective from Sri Aurobindo, he attempts to see the Quartets in meaningful relation to spiritual classics like The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost and Savitri. His focus, therefore, is not primarily on the fundamental intuitions underlying Eliot's poetry. And though he a knowledges the influence of Hindu-Buddhist thought on Eliot, he does not discuss the Tantric elements in the Quartets.

In his short yet lucid book, Beneath the Axle-Tree (New Delhi: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1977), J.Birje-Patil's basic concern is to introduce Eliot to beginners and to provide them with an aid to the understanding of Eliot. Hence, he does not elaborate on the Indian philosophical themes and symbols underlying Eliot's poetry and drama.

Two other works are noteworthy. Mohit Kumar Ray's book, T.S.Eliot: Search For a Critical Credo (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1978), is not concerned with the influence of Indian thought and sensibility on Eliot's poetry and drama; it is rather an attempt to show how Eliot moved from a 'monistic' towards a 'pluralistic' position as a literary critic. K.S.Misra, in his book The Plays of T.S.Eliot: A Critical Study (N.Y.: Asia Publishing House, Inc., 1977), focuses on Eliot the dramatist. His study concentrates on an elaborate analysis of the texts, characters, structure and versification of the plays; it seeks to assess the extent of the dramatist's success in realising his aims. Hence, the book does not concern itself with the Indian philosophical themes and symbols in Eliot's work or their relation to his basic vision of the human condition.

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